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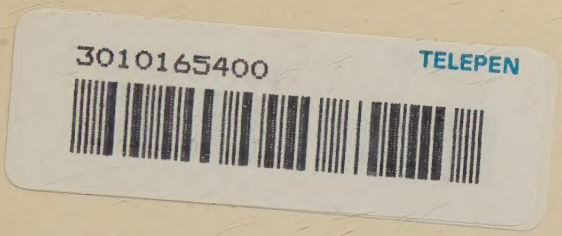

ROBERT BURNS AND MRS. DUNLOP

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Mrs FRANCES ANNA DUNLOP.

From the Picture Painted by Gilb. Mosman in 1747

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ROBERT BURNS

AND

MRS. DUNLOP

CORRESPONDENCE NOW PUBLISHED IN FULL FOR THE FIRST TIME

WITH ELUCIDATIONS

BY

WILLIAM WALLACE

EDITOR OF ROBERT CHAMBERS'S 'LIFE AND WORKS OF ROBERT BURNS'

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LONDON
HODDER AND STOUGHTON
27 PATERNOSTER ROW
1898

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PREFACE

THIS volume contains very nearly all the letters that passed, in the course of their ten years' friendship, between Burns and Mrs. Dunlop. Currie, in his *Works of Robert Burns* (1800), printed thirty-nine letters of Burns to Mrs. Dunlop; Cromek, in his *Reliques*, printed three more; and Scott-Douglas, in his *Works of Robert Burns* (1877), added a fourth from a MS. of Mr. Locker-Lampson's. The Lochryan MSS., now in the possession of Mr. R. B. Adam, of Buffalo, N.Y., contain thirty-eight more original holograph letters and parts of letters from the poet to Mrs. Dunlop, together with MSS. of several of the Poems, and ninety-seven letters from Mrs. Dunlop to Burns. The whole of these, old and new, have been reproduced here with the utmost possible correctness; the few *lacunæ* ascertained and conjectured are indicated. Four of the letters printed by Currie have been collated with the original MSS. in the collection of Mr. Adam, and the emendations and additions thence derived are of particular interest, both in themselves and as illustrations of Currie's editorial method.

The Burns letters in the Lochryan (Adam) collection are the surplus of the selection made for Currie's use by Mrs. Dunlop and Gilbert Burns from the MSS. which the lady had in her possession at the poet's death. It is unnecessary here to do more than refer to the story of the bargain she struck with those who had charge of Burns's affairs. Comparison of the number of letters

she wrote to the poet with the number he wrote to her further discredits the popular tradition as to her jocular repurchase of every one of her own with one of the poet's. And while the Lochryan MSS. proper throw no light on this subject, one at least of the four MSS. of Mr. Adam's referred to above confirms Gilbert's statement that the selection was made by Mrs. Dunlop and himself. These four are the originals of the letters of 12th February 1788, 1st January 1789, 4th March 1789, and 6th December 1792. That of 4th March 1789 is docketted "May be printed" in Mrs. Dunlop's hand. The fact that the docket on that of 12th February 1788, referred to in the text, is in a hand which is neither Mrs. Dunlop's nor Gilbert's, suggests that they had an assistant in the work of selection.

The Lochryan MSS., now published for the first time, were in all probability never seen by Currie. Manifestly none of them has ever been handled by either editor or printer. They are all in a state of beautiful preservation, and include at least as fine specimens of the poet's handwriting as any that have seen the light in the original or reproduction. Besides the letters there are in the collection holograph MSS. of "Tam o' Shanter," the first draft of "Passion's Cry," "The Chevalier's Lament," "Lament for James, Earl of Glencairn," "On reading in a newspaper the Death of J. M'Leod, Esq., brother to Miss T. M'Leod, a particular friend of the Author's," "On scaring some Water-fowl on Loch Turit," "O Love will venture in where it darena weel be seen," and two dubious originals, "On a Tear," and "The Tears I shed must ever fall."

Mrs. Dunlop kept the Lochryan MSS. at Dunlop till her death, when she left the estate of Lochryan and the MSS. to her grandson, General Sir John Wallace,

from whom the documents descended to his son and heir, the next possessor of Lochryan, who left them by will to his youngest brother, the present Colonel F. J. Wallace, from whom they were recently acquired by Mr. Adam. They have thus been continuously in the hands of the Dunlop-Wallace family during the past century. Colonel Wallace states that to the best of his knowledge they have been kept in a box in the safe-room at Lochryan for the last fifty years.

The interweaving of this new material with the old makes the Correspondence of Burns and Mrs. Dunlop almost unique in its completeness. A careful search after possible *lacunæ* has discovered no more than four places where it can be definitely stated that a letter of Burns is missing, and of the gross sum of Mrs. Dunlop's it appears that Burns had lost or destroyed only nine —a circumstance which must have wiped out the memory of the many proofs the lady had received that he did not always read her communications with the most respectful care, and at the same time must have deepened the remorse she felt for her neglect of the poet during the last eighteen months of his life.

Students of Burns will be interested, in the first place, to know what light the Lochryan MSS. throw on the cause of that unhappy episode in the poet's life. The point is fully discussed in the text (see p. 413, etc.), but it may be said generally that a broad view of the complete Correspondence, now possible for the first time, strongly favours the theory that Mrs. Dunlop's failure to answer Burns's letters of 1795 and 1796 was due to inadvertence rather than to any offence he could, consciously or unconsciously, have given her, and that if pique influenced her—that is to say, if her silence was caused by his failure to answer promptly the last letter she sent him from London in January of 1795—his

previous negligence had afforded her at least a pretext for the severe punishment she inflicted. A glance at the table of dates (*infra*) will show which of the two had the better reason, on the whole, to reproach the other with neglect.

The new matter is otherwise remarkably rich in fresh biographical details, in illustration not only of the relations between the two friends, but also of the poet's character, walk, and conversation, and in material for study of the text of numerous poems. It reveals the fact that it was at least within the bounds of possibility that Burns might have been a military officer, and alternatively a professor in the University of Edinburgh, and that Adam Smith, who has not hitherto been known to have taken much interest in him, conceived at a very early date the idea of making him a Salt Officer in the Customs service at a salary of £30 a year. Burns certainly dallied with the notion of taking a stand of colours, and uncommon pains were taken by Mrs. Dunlop and Dr. Moore to procure for him the nomination to the Chair of Agriculture in Edinburgh, which was founded in 1787. Much that is new is brought out as to his connection with the Excise; for example, the fact that he aimed from the first at a Port-Officership with its superior emoluments, the probable date of his initiation into his profession, Corbet's services to him, and so forth.

There has hitherto been no evidence that Burns was so deeply indebted to Mrs. Dunlop in a pecuniary sense as his brother Gilbert alleged. In the new letters there is proof that she sent him an occasional gift of a £5 note. The sum of these could not have amounted to a great deal. It is of more interest to note the poet's attitude to this kindly habit of his not very wealthy friend. At first he was deeply offended, and he was, of course, never

exactly comfortable under the beneficence of his correspondent; but he reasoned himself into toleration in several characteristic epistles. She treated him all along as a social equal and an intellectual superior; that circumstance alone sufficed to put any offensive interpretation of her practice out of the question. The new light upon the subject confirms—if confirmation were necessary—the view that her gifts of money were presents in exactly the same kind as his gifts of books and cognac to her, and in no sense dictated by charity or the notion that he required at any time pecuniary assistance.

Mrs. Dunlop, as will be seen, was a fearless critic of Burns. Almost the first subject she exploited in the correspondence was the "undecent" blots she discovered and wished removed in the Kilmarnock edition. He treated her remonstrances on that head and her literary criticisms generally with scant respect. There is very much in these pages illustrative of that well-known saying of his to Mrs. Dunlop—"You are right in your guess that I am not very amenable to counsel." His Fescennine excursions he defended in a manner characteristically human. "You may guess," he said, "that the convivial hours of men have their mysteries of wit and mirth, and I hold it a piece of contemptible baseness to detail the sallies of thoughtless merriment, or the orgies of accidental intoxication to the ear of cool sobriety or female delicacy."

Burns's "religion of the heart" is expounded anew in several of the Lochryan letters with warm eloquence. What could be choicer in this line than his consolatory epistle of 9th July 1790?

Thomson says finely—

> Attach thee firmly to the virtuous deeds
> And offices of life—to life itself—
> And all its transient joys sit loose.

And yet, like many other fine sayings, it has, I fear, more of philosophy than human nature in it. Poor David's pathetic cry of grief is much more the language of man: "O Absalom! My son! My son!" *A World to Come!* is the only genuine balm for an agonising heart, torn to pieces in the wrench of parting for ever (to mortal view) with friends, inmates of the bosom and dear to the soul!

A letter assigned conjecturally to Miss Rachel Dunlop as recipient contains an even more remarkable and interesting protest against original sin.

The value of the Lochryan MSS. for textual and critical purposes is very great; it has been to some extent used for these purposes, but a closer study of the documents has revealed several not unimportant errors in the deductions recently drawn. The dates of quite a number of poems and letters have had to be altered in the light of the Correspondence as here completed. Note, in particular, the establishment of the right date of the "New Year's Day Address" to Mrs. Dunlop (1789 instead of 1790), and the clearing up of the mystery of the date and place of composition of the last of the Ellisland letters, which has yet hitherto seemed to be also one of the first of the Dumfries ones. There are here earlier versions than any hitherto known of various poems, new facts about the building up of "The Poet's Progress," and a valuable contribution to the controversy about "Passion's Cry."

There is a notable contribution to Burns apologetics in the fact confirmed by Mrs. Dunlop's letters of the time, that Mrs. Burns spent part of the summer of 1790 —the year of the Anne Park episode—in Ayrshire.

The new Burns letters in the text are exact copies of the originals, spelling and punctuation being adhered to with all but literal precision. Whole letters and parts of letters not previously published are distinguished by a line running down the left side of the letterpress.

The text of the four old letters, of which the MSS. are in the Adam collection, has been made to agree with the originals, and for the rest of the old letters the best available revisions have been utilised. Mrs. Dunlop's letters have not been reproduced with quite the same exactitude. Her actual misspellings have been corrected, but an attempt has been made to retain such so-called misspellings as were current at the time, such as "an wound," which affords a graphic illustration of the current pronunciation. She did not punctuate, and that defect has been supplied. Addresses of letters are indicated by *Ad.* prefixed at the margin; where the superscription is "To Mrs. Dunlop" or "To Burns," no authentic address has been found. Those marked "franked by Kerr" were addressed by the secretary to the Post Office, whose whole-hearted admiration of Burns procured him so frequently the privilege of receiving his letters without the heavy tax of fourpence for a "single" and eightpence for a "double." The numerous notes, as well as the connecting and explanatory narrative, are printed in large type for convenience of reference, and because they are in the great majority of cases comments on the letters which they elucidate.

Mrs. Dunlop's letters to Burns, now published for the first time, are almost as essential as his own to a right understanding of the period of his life—the last decade—which they cover. She was a very different woman from Mrs. Maclehose; her portrait suggests capacity and strength of will rather than a tendency to Werterism. But she was in her way as much of a sentimentalist. There are almost innumerable and very pathetic indications in her Correspondence—which is of all the more value that it was never intended for publication—that she regarded the advent of a letter from him as an event of supreme importance. She was in agony

when, for some unforeseen reason, he failed to answer her. She studied and commented on every line that he sent her. She was willing to write three letters to his one; and yet she took the most modest view of her own part in the Correspondence. "I deceive myself most egregiously," she says with a sigh and yet almost with a touch of old-fashioned coquetry, "if you would not be melancholy for at least two hours after my demise, whose Correspondence has been to me a varied scene of hope and delight, and an intercourse of that mixture between amusement and esteem to which I believed I was wholly superannuated." Her letters to Burns must be read as carefully as Clarinda's, for though there is absent from them the fascination of a hopeless passion, her almost motherly anxiety concerned itself equally with his character and with his reputation, took stock of every scrap of his verse, and of every action of his life. Thus it is quite impossible to understand Burns's defiant declaration so variously criticised, that he was a stranger alike to jealousy and to infidelity, until one has read the remarkable and mercilessly plain-spoken letter from Mrs. Dunlop which called that assertion forth—the letter in which she warns him against thinking lightly of his wife because she had "succumbed" to him before marriage. It is equally impossible to understand the letter of Burns, now published for the first time, in which he almost grandiloquently but effectually disposes in advance of the modern theory that he was "an inspired faun" and "a lewd peasant of genius," without reading the letter in which Mrs. Dunlop, also anticipating certain modern criticism, writes "A gentleman told me with a grave face the other day that you certainly were a sad wretch, that your works were immoral and infamous, that you lampooned the clergy and laughed at the ridiculous parts of religion,

and he was told you were a scandalous free-liver in every sense of the word." In addition, Mrs. Dunlop's letters, in equal measure with the new ones from him to her, throw a flood of light upon various events in his life, upon his desperate struggle with farming difficulties in Ellisland, upon his start as an exciseman, upon the earnest desire of his Ayrshire friends, who were evidently not of the insincere or fair-weather order, to secure for him an academic or other position worthy of him.

The relation between Burns and Mrs. Dunlop is probably unique in literary history. She was not to him what Madame de Warens was to Rousseau or what "the divine Emily" was to Voltaire, or what Charlotte von Stein was to Goethe. She did not inspire him to literary exertion as Lady Hesketh inspired Cowper, although she had some ambition that way. Her own view of the relationship she wished to establish is indeed given in one of the earliest of her letters, "I have been told Voltaire read all his manuscripts to an old woman and printed nothing but what she approved. I wish you would name me to her office." Although Burns did not appoint her to the "office," she appointed herself. In her letters she appears, as has already been said, as his constant and sometimes even ruthless critic. Occasionally "broad" in speech with the "breadth" of her century, she was fiercely conservative in all matters of morality, and even of "impropriety" in phraseology. Often her literary criticism is sadly and even ludicrously inept, as in what she says about "The Twa Dogs," and in her suggestion that Burns should imitate the "chaste" Thomson. There is reason to believe that Burns resented, and was even deeply offended at, her strictures upon "Tam o' Shanter," which are indeed provokingly wooden. But occasionally she seems to anticipate the

verdict of posterity. Thus when her correspondent sent her a copy of that "infusion of gall, wormwood, and aquafortis," his terrible "Ode to the memory of Mrs. Oswald of Auchincruive," she asked him good-naturedly, "Are you not a sad wicked creature to send a poor old wife straight to the Devil, because she gave you a ride in a cold night?" Very many readers of the Ode during the past hundred years must have wished for an opportunity of putting the same question. On another point which has recently been raised afresh by the representation of Burns as an enemy of "the Kirk" her common-sense enabled her to take the right side. When he was attacked in her presence as an assailant of religion, she pointed out that his satires were really directed at persons who were "too black for his ink, low beneath his pen." But "I begged to appeal to the lines left in Mr. Lawrie's manse as proof positive that the clergy were not attacked in a collective body." It must he allowed, however, that Mrs. Dunlop is much more successful as a critic of conduct than of poetry. The advices she gives Burns are those of a mother to a grown-up son whose powers she takes pride in, but whose passions she is afraid of. She encourages him in domesticity. After she has an opportunity of seeing Jean she is warm in praise of his choice. But she fears the "temptations" of life in the Excise. She gives as an argument in favour of his candidature for the Professorship of Agriculture in Edinburgh University that a "grave member of the College would not be so often the prey of jolly Bacchus as an exciseman."

Mrs. Dunlop was not a blue-stocking. Her spelling, as has been seen, was not perfect, but in her day, as Thackeray has said, "people as soon thought of doing their own washing as their own spelling." But she knew

her Bible and her Burns, her Thomson and her Shenstone, her Richardson and her Fielding. She had at least a superficial acquaintance with the more popular Continental literature of her time, and on the whole was probably more cultured and had a keener interest in literature than most Scottish and English gentlewomen in the end of last century. She wrote indifferent verses and sent them to Burns. She did not place too much stress on these exercises; on the contrary, "I wonder at the ease (impudence anybody else would call it) with which I scribble all my nonsense to you as a child would scratch mathematical schemes to Sir Isaac Newton." I have thought it therefore advisable, and indeed only fair to her memory, to give general indications of her "schemes," but not to print them in full. When one reads her letters indeed, one is surprised that she had time or heart for literary concerns at all. She appears in them as a woman of many cares and sorrows, and in the beginning of the Correspondence, at all events, of not a few mortifications. These she pours with Richardsonian precision, and occasionally with Richardsonian prolixity, into the sympathetic ear of Burns. Sometimes she bursts unconsciously into poetry much more genuine than her set efforts, as when, writing from Loudon Castle where her son-in-law lies dead, and two daughters are prostrate, she puts an Iliad of misery and anxiety in the nut-shell of "'Tis for light sorrows women weep." On the whole, it may be doubted if Burns ever met a kindlier or wiser woman than Mrs. Dunlop; the respect for her which found expression in the agony of his last days was well founded. It may be that she "deserted" him during these days, that instead of telling him of reports she may have heard to his detriment, as she had been in the habit of doing, and giving him an opportunity of

vindicating his character, she believed them without examination. On this point, as has been said, the Correspondence throws little light. But there is some reason to believe that when the "calm afternoon of life" for which Mrs. Dunlop sighed, came to her, she cherished a peculiar affection for the man of genius whose greatness, in common with her generation, she but imperfectly understood, who, "spirit fierce and bold" though he was, gave her consolation in her hour of affliction and wounded pride, of whom—such was her view of her own position as "honoured patron"—she wrote, "I declare, upon soul and conscience, that I regard it as a singular honour and happiness, nay, one of those upon which I have ever valued myself most, that *you* think my health or me worth being interested in, or preferring a warm request to be informed about."

I am greatly indebted to Miss Agnes E. A. Wallace, Laggray, Row, for granting me permission to reproduce the portrait, taken at the age of seventeen, of her great-grandmother, Mrs. Dunlop, which is her property. I have also to express my thanks to the numerous gentlemen who have assisted me while preparing this volume for publication—in particular to J. A. A. Wallace, Esq., of Lochryan, and to Colonel F. J. Wallace of Arrandale, Ayr, for freely and fully supplying me with details of family history; to Major Dalrymple Hay for giving particulars of the history of Dunlop House and estate; and to Provost Mackay, Mr. David Sneddon, Mr. Duncan M'Naught and Mr. George Dunlop of Kilmarnock, and Mr. William Rattray, Dunlop, for innumerable services. For invaluable and enthusiastic co-operation in the work of arrangement, research, and revision, I cannot be too grateful to my friend Mr. James Davidson.

WILLIAM WALLACE.

GLASGOW, *January* 1898.

INTRODUCTION

MRS. DUNLOP AND HER FAMILY

IN the Baptismal Register of Ayr there is the following entry: "Frances Anna Wallace, lawful daughter to Sir Thomas Wallace of Craigie, advocate, and Dame Eleanora Agnew, his lady, was born April 16th, 1730, baptized Wednesday the 22nd of the same month by Mr. John Hunter privately."

Mrs. Dunlop was very proud of her pedigree and of her connection by blood with the Liberator of Scotland; and she was encouraged in her pride by Burns. But she was not, strictly speaking, a "descendant" of the patriot, though she could claim direct descent from the founder of the Wallace family, Richard the Welshman, who accompanied the Norman Walter Fitzalan, founder of the House of Stuart, from Oswestry on the Welsh Border into Scotland, at the time when David I. was bent on anglicising his country, and invited Southrons, both barons and priests, to aid him in the work. Adam Wallace of Riccarton (Richardton, the home of Richard) was in the middle of the twelfth century regarded as the head of his house.[1] He had

[1] Dr. J. O. Mitchell, the distinguished Glasgow antiquary, has given it as his view—on which I express no opinion—that the present head of

two sons, of whom the younger, Malcolm, became the father of Sir William Wallace of Elderslie. The elder, Sir Richard, was ancestor of Mrs. Dunlop. He married Lady Helen Bruce, daughter of the Earl of Carrick, so that Mrs. Dunlop could claim kinship with both of Scotland's heroes. John of Richardton, grandson of Sir Richard and Lady Helen, married Dame Margaret, only daughter and heiress of Sir James Lindsay of Craigie. It was arranged on the occasion of this marriage that the family should for all time bear the title of Craigie. The Wallaces of Craigie intermarried with the best families in Scotland—Douglases, Maxwells, Kennedys, Rutherfords, Johnstones, Campbells, and Cunninghams. The baronetcy came in with Sir Hew, last but three of the Wallaces of Craigie. He was succeeded by his cousin Sir Thomas, an eminent lawyer, who attained to the position of Lord Justice-Clerk. Two sons of the latter, William and Thomas, were successively holders of the estate and title. Sir Thomas married Eleanor, only daughter and heiress of Colonel Andrew Agnew of Lochryan, Wigtownshire. They had two children, Thomas who predeceased his father, dying in 1756, at the age of twenty-seven—he was a Guardsman, and his sister told Burns that he was buried in Westminster Abbey—and Frances Anna who became Mrs. Dunlop. She was thus twenty-first in descent from Richard the Welshman.

Frances Anna Wallace married in 1748 John

the Wallace family is Mr. H. R. Wallace of Cloncaird, Ayrshire, as being "undoubted representative by unbroken male descent of the John Wallace who was owner of Elderslie in 1390." Of the Lochryan family he says that they, "springing from an elder brother of the John Wallace of Elderslie of 1390, undoubtedly represent the Riccartons of whom the Elderslies were cadets, but they are not Wallaces, but Dunlops of Dunlop, and if they had had an unquestioned male descent from Richard the Welshman, it is not clear how the representation of the stem would have given them the representation of the branch."

Dunlop of Dunlop[1] (17th of that ilk), the representative of an Ayrshire family almost as old as her own. "Gulielmus de Dunlop" appears in a notarial copy of an inquest in the charter chest of the burgh of Irvine in 1260. A Neil Fitz-Robert de Dunlap signed the Ragman Roll in 1296. We hear of a John de Dunlop in 1407, who was probably father of Alexander Dunlop of Hunthall, "whose son was John Dunlop of that ilk, who begot Robert Dunlop of Hartland, whose daughter married Hugh Maxwell of Auldhouse soon after 1500." In the seventeenth century most of the Dunlops were warm supporters of the Presbyterian cause; most of the Wallaces, on the other hand, were partisans of the House of Stuart. In 1684 John Dunlop succeeded in getting part of his lands converted into the free barony of Dunlop.[2] Francis, the father of Mrs. Dunlop's husband, was one of the Scottish gentlemen summoned in 1707 to witness the "depositation" of the Scottish regalia in Edinburgh Castle. He seems

[1] According to an exceptionally well-accredited family tradition they made a runaway match from Dunskey House, the property of the Hunter-Blair family, near Portpatrick, where they happened to meet.

[2] The lands of Dunlop, in the Cunningham division of Ayrshire, were held continuously by the family of that name from 1260 to 1843, when they were sold. Dunlop House, a substantial and handsome country house, of the Tudor order of architecture, is pleasantly situated in the centre of gently undulating "policies," a mile and a half from the village of Dunlop, and about three miles from Stewarton, which was the post-town in Mrs Dunlop's day, and where Burns paid occasional visits to his unfortunate "Uncle Robert." The estate of Dunlop was purchased in 1843 by Thomas Dunlop Douglas. He died in 1868, leaving the estate in fee-simple to his grand-niece, Ellen Douglas, daughter of Mr. Robert Hathorn Johnston-Stewart of Physgill and Glasserton, Wigtownshire. But as she was then a child, it was left in liferent to Mr. Thomas Dunlop Cunninghame Graham, nephew of Mrs. Douglas. In 1873 Miss Johnston-Stewart married Mr. James Francis Dalrymple Hay, eldest son of Admiral Sir John Dalrymple Hay. On the death of Mr. Cunninghame Graham in 1884 she succeeded to Dunlop estate. Mr. and Mrs. Dalrymple Hay have resided at Dunlop House since.

to have, in 1748, resigned his estate to his son John, who was born in 1707.

Mrs. Dunlop appears to have lived happily with her elderly husband. In 1761 she fell heiress on her mother's death to the estate of Lochryan, and sixteen years later, on the death of her father, who had married *en secondes noces*, Antonia Dunlop, a sister of his son-in-law, Craigie also would have become her property, if it had not previously been transferred to her eldest son, Thomas. But in 1783 her son was compelled to sell Craigie,[1] the ancestral but deeply encumbered estate of the Wallaces, to Mr. William Campbell, in the hands of whose descendants it still remains.[2] Her husband died on 5th June 1785. This

[1] Burns, in his "Vision," has a stanza on the Wallaces :—

> His country's saviour mark him well!
> Bold Riccartoun's heroic swell,
> And he who fighting glorious fell
> In high command;
> And he whom ruthless fates expel
> His native land.

Burns himself explains that the references in the first four lines are to Sir William Wallace, his cousin Adam Wallace of Richardton or Riccarton, and Sir John Wallace of Craigie, whose gallantry contributed most materially to the defeat of the English at the Battle of Sark in 1448. He gives no explanation of the last two lines. In a paper on "The Wallaces of Elderslie," read by Dr. J. O. Mitchell before the Glasgow Archæological Society on 17th March 1884, they are thus referred to. "The reference undoubtedly is to Sir Thomas Dunlop Wallace. When Burns wrote the lines, the judicial sale of Craigie was recent, and the unfortunate heir of the Wallaces, stripped by 'ruthless fates' of the last of the old acres, had abandoned 'his native land' and retired to England." This view is no doubt quite correct. It is extremely probable, to say the least, that Sir Thomas Dunlop Wallace spent some time in England before settling in Edinburgh.

[2] "The old ruinous Castle of Craigie," as Mrs. Dunlop pathetically terms it in the Correspondence, which was the home of the Craigie Wallaces from 1370 to 1588, stands on a gentle eminence and within grounds of two acres in extent, about four miles from Kilmarnock. The ruins consist of two gables, ramparts and vaults; a stone in one of the walls bears the armorial escutcheon of the families of Wallace

loss was followed by "a long and severe illness, which reduced her mind to the most distressing state of depression." It was at this time that she read "The Cotter's Saturday Night," and resolved on making the acquaintance of its author. Thus at the time the Correspondence opens Mrs. Dunlop was suffering an accumulation of distresses. She retained Lochryan, but lived at Dunlop House with her second son, Andrew, the "Major" of the Letters, who extended his hospitality also to most of his unmarried sisters. She spent a good deal of time during the years with which we have to deal in East Lothian with her son John, "the Captain," first at his house in Haddington, and afterwards at his farm of Moreham Mains. Then when her daughter Susan got married to Mr. Henri, the French refugee, and leased Loudon Castle in Ayrshire, she was an occasional guest there, and was once nurse to a whole sick household. She moved in "the best set" in the county of Ayr, and had connections, shared apparently by her son Andrew, with some of the most prosperous merchants in Glasgow. She had at least one bond with Edinburgh in her step-mother Lady Wallace, who had a house there, and appears to have kept Susan Dunlop as a companion before Henri appeared on the scene. Her letters, however, afford few glimpses of the personages or social activities of the time. Though she had not passed her sixtieth year, she had voluntarily gone into semi-retirement for reasons already noted, to which has in

and Lindsay. The original castle must have been a strong fortress, as there are abundant evidences that, besides being protected by the usual tower and moat, it was guarded by morasses and ditches at every quarter whence attack could come. Newton Castle, situated in Wallacetown, a suburb of Ayr, and separated from it by the river, was the home of the Wallaces after the destruction of Craigie Castle by fire. But it was rendered uninhabitable by a storm in 1701. Sir Thomas Wallace, Mrs. Dunlop's father, built a mansion in the neighbourhood, to which he gave the name of Craigie House. This was sold with the estates in 1783.

all likelihood to be added her estrangement from her eldest son. She was absorbed in her family, in books, and in Burns.

Mrs. Dunlop survived Burns nineteen years, dying on 24th May 1815. According to one of her biographers her testament-dative was given up to the Commissary of Glasgow by her daughter, Mrs. Robert Glasgow of Mount-Greenan, and registered 10th August 1816, her movable estate being sworn under £800.

As most of Mrs. Dunlop's children are mentioned in her Correspondence with Burns, it is necessary to give some account of them here.

John and Frances Dunlop had seven sons and six daughters. Francis, the eldest of the family, born 7th August 1749, died in infancy. Thomas, the second son, born 18th September 1750, assumed the name of Wallace and the baronetcy of Craigie. By a family arrangement made in 1774, he became proprietor of Craigie, but, as has been said, it had to be sold nine years later. Sir Thomas lived in Edinburgh for the most part, and had the reputation of being a buck. Along with the Duke of Hamilton he founded in 1777 the Hunters' Club, which was the nucleus of the more celebrated Caledonian Hunt, established in the following year. In September 1772 he married Eglintoune, youngest daughter of Sir William Maxwell, Bart., of Monreith, and sister of the more famous Jean, Duchess of Gordon. (It was she who, according to an Edinburgh legend, used to be sent from Lady Maxwell's town-house to fetch water for tea from the Fountain Well, and when the future Duchess of Gordon was caught riding a sow in the High Street, it was the future Lady Wallace that was found aiding her in her escapade by thumping the animal with a stick.) It appears from

the Correspondence that she and her mother-in-law did not pull well together, that indeed they came to a violent breach. Lady Wallace cut a rather notorious figure in Scottish society in the end of the eighteenth century. As Sir William Fraser puts it, she indulged a literary taste, and was noted for her smart and humorous sallies. Another writer says she had "more wit than delicacy," which was a common enough twist in those days, and "was a favourite in the literary circles adorned by Hume, Adam Smith, and John Home." She wrote two dramas, *The Ton, or the Follies of Fashion*, and *The Whim*, a Comedy in Three Acts. The former was acted in April 1788 at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, but did not meet with approval, and an attempt to reintroduce it failed. The latter was disallowed by the Lord Chancellor on account of certain political allusions; it was printed at Margate in 1795. The sole surviving son of Sir Thomas and Lady Wallace[1] was John Alexander Agnew Wallace. He figures as "Sandy Wallace" in the Correspondence, and was a favourite of Mrs. Dunlop's, though she had no dealings with his parents. Born in 1775, he entered the army in 1787, and is said to have taken part in three general engagements before he was fifteen years of age. We meet him in the Correspondence as *aide-de-camp* to his maternal uncle, Lieutenant-Colonel Maxwell, who had a command under Cornwallis in the campaigns against Tippoo Sultaun of Mysore. He afterwards served under Sir Ralph Abercromby in Egypt, and commanded the 88th Regiment (the Connaught Rangers) in the Peninsular War. He was made a K.C.B., and rose to the rank of General in 1851. He married in 1829 Janet, daughter of Mr. William Rodger, a magistrate

[1] Sir Thomas Dunlop Wallace who, after the death of his first wife, married a second time in France, died in 1837.

of Glasgow. By her he had a family of five sons and one daughter. He succeeded to Lochryan on the death of Mrs. Dunlop. He himself died in 1857. John Alexander Agnew Wallace, Esq., the present proprietor of Lochryan, is his grandson.

Alexander, the third of Mrs. Dunlop's sons, died young. Andrew, the fourth, "the Major" of the Correspondence, succeeded to the estate of Dunlop in accordance with a disposition executed by his father. He entered the army and served in the American War. At the time of the Correspondence he was living, presumably on half-pay, at Dunlop House, and looking after his estate. He raised and commanded the Ayrshire Fencible Cavalry, received the rank of Brigadier-General, and died unmarried in 1804. He was succeeded in Dunlop by his brother James (the fifth son), who also adopted the military profession and saw service in the American War. Sir John Moore, as the Correspondence shows, was a fellow-officer with him in the 82nd Regiment, which was raised by the Duke of Hamilton. In 1787 he himself raised men for a company of the 77th Regiment, which Sir Robert Abercromby took out to India in the following year. Like his nephew, he appears in the Correspondence as taking part in the Mysore Wars. He afterwards commanded a Brigade under Wellington in the Peninsula, and became Major-General in 1810. He retired from the army in 1812, and represented the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright from 1813 to 1816. His eldest son John was also a soldier and a politician. He served in the Grenadier Guards, and for a time represented the county of Ayr in Parliament. In 1833 he entirely rebuilt Dunlop House. Five years later, he was created a baronet. Dying the following year, he was succeeded by his son Sir James Dunlop, who was also a soldier like his

father and grandfather, and took part in the Crimean War. He died unmarried in 1858, and the Dunlop baronetcy became extinct.

John, the sixth son of Mrs. Dunlop, also entered the army, but retired early on half-pay. He married his cousin, Frances Magdalene Dunlop, by whom he had a family of seven sons and four daughters. At the opening of the Correspondence he had acquired from the Dalrymple family the farm of Morham Mains (now Morham Muir) in East Lothian, and having bought up the lease of the sitting tenant, was building a new house on the farm with a view to cultivating it himself. Mrs. Dunlop visited "the Captain" first at Haddington, where he lived while this house was building, and afterwards at Morham, whither she was summoned by her daughter-in-law at her many confinements. Gilbert Burns at a subsequent period acted as the "manager" of Captain Dunlop's farm for a few years. It may be noted, in contradiction to one of the numerous loose statements that have been made regarding this connection between John Dunlop and Gilbert Burns (such as that it was on account of the sale of Morham that Gilbert removed to Grant's Braes and undertook the management of the Blantyre Estate), that in the roll of freeholders of the county of Haddington for the year 1804, there appears the name of "John Dunlop of Morham for the lands of Morham Mains and two fields called Ploughfields."

Of Anthony, the seventh son, Burns, in a letter to Mrs. Dunlop dated 10th April 1790, writes that he was possessed of "a purity, a tenderness, a dignity, an elegance of soul which are of no use, only absolutely disqualifying for the truly important business of making a man's way into life." In all accounts of the Dunlop family, Anthony figures as an officer in the Navy.

The references to him in the Correspondence indicate that the earlier portion of his life, at all events, was spent in the merchant service, and it is improbable that he ever entered the Navy. In 1803 he married Ann Cunningham, daughter of the Collector of Customs in Irvine. After a time he settled in the Isle of Man as a tenant farmer, and ultimately bought a small estate, to which, in honour of his family, he gave the name of Ellerslie. Late in life, however, he found himself hopelessly in debt and embarrassed by litigation. On the morning of 29th June 1828, he committed suicide in an Edinburgh hotel.[1]

Of Mrs. Dunlop's six daughters, Agnes Eleanor, the eldest, married Joseph Elias Perochon, a French royalist whom the Revolution drove to London. There he flourished for a time as a merchant, but his eyesight failing, he retired from business and settled at Castlebank, Dumfries. Mrs. Perochon showed great kindness to Burns's widow. Out of gratitude Jean gave her for sepulture the spot in St. Michael's Churchyard where Burns was first buried. There Mrs. Perochon, who died on 10th October 1825, lies buried. Susan, the second daughter, married in 1789 James Henri of Bernaldean, also a refugee, and a landed proprietor in France. He rented Loudon Castle and resided there till his death on 22nd June 1790. Mrs. Henri gave birth to a child on 15th November of the same year. This "sweet flow'ret, pledge o' meikle love" succeeded

[1] The sad story of Anthony Dunlop was fully told for the first time by the Rev. Richard Simpson, Dunscore, Dumfriesshire, in an article on "Ellerslie in Man" which he contributed to the *Glasgow Herald* of October 16, 1897. Mr. Simpson's narrative is based on unpublished notes written by Mr. James Grierson of Dalgoner, a Dumfriesshire antiquary and intimate friend of Anthony Dunlop. One of his notes runs thus: "Anthony Dunlop went to sea in his thirteenth year, 1787, and saw various service in the East Indies and had not been very fortunate." This confirms the impression created by the Correspondence.

to his father's estate in France. The third daughter Margaret died in infancy. Frances, the fourth daughter, married in 1777 a Wigtownshire proprietor, Robert Vans Agnew of Sheuchan and Barnbarroch. The present owner of these estates and representative of this branch of Mrs. Dunlop's descendants is Captain John Vans Agnew, of the Indian Staff Corps. Rachel, the fifth, married Robert Glasgow of Mount-Greenan, and, through an only daughter, is represented at the present day by the Robertson-Glasgows of Mount-Greenan. Keith, the youngest, Burns's "blooming Keith," died unmarried in 1858.

CHRONOLOGY OF LETTERS

B.—letters from Burns to Mrs. Dunlop. D.—letters from Mrs. Dunlop to Burns. * letters entirely new. † letters partly new. — date unascertained. ——— letters missing.

B.	D.
1786.	
	———
Nov. 15†.	
	———
———	
	Dec. 30.
1787.	
	Jan. 9.
Jan. 15.	
	Feb. 26.
March 22†.	
	March 29.
	April 14.
April 15.	
	,, 29.
,, 30.	
	May 21.
Aug. 5 or 6*.	July 30.
	Sep. 9.
	Nov. 15.
Nov. 17 (?).	
	Dec. 25.
1788.	
Jan. 21.	
	Jan. —.
,, —*.	
Feb. 12†.	
	Feb. 30.
March 7.	
	March 14.

B.	D.
1788.	
March 26*.	
	March —
,, 31*.	
	April 16.
April 28.	
May 4.	
	May —
,, 27†.	
	June 4.
June 13 (14).	
	,, 16.
	,, 24.
July 10.	
	July 22.
Aug. 2.	
	Aug. 9.
,, 16.	
,, 21*.	
	,, —.
———	
	Sep. 12.
Sep. 27.	
	Oct. 1
	,, 9.
	,, 21.
Oct. 23*.	
,, 29*.	
	Nov. 5.
Nov. 13.	,, 13.

B.	D.
1788.	
	Nov. 26.
	Dec. 3.
Dec. 17.	
	,, 24.
1789.	
Jan. 1.	Jan. 1.
,, —*.	
	,, 22.
	,, 24.
Feb. 5*.	
	Feb. 10, 17.
,, 23*.	
March 4.	
	March 18.
,, 25*.	
	April 1.
April 3*.	
,, 21*.	
	,, 23.
	,, —.
May 4.	
	May —.
June 21†.	
	June 27.
July 7*.	
	June 27, July 13.
,, 17*.	
	Aug. 1.
Aug. 19*.	
	,, 20.
Sep. 6.	Sep. 6.
	,, 20.
Oct. 2*.	
	Oct. 18.
Nov. 8*.	
	Nov. 25.
	Dec. 11.
Dec. 13.	
1790.	
	Jan. 7.
	,, 20.
Jan. 25.	
	Feb. 16.
	March 4.

B.	D.
1790.	
March —*.	
	April 6.
April 10.	
	,, 23.
	May 15.
June 6*.	
	June 27.
	July 1.
July 9*.	
	,, 22.
,, 30*.	
	Aug. 5.
Aug. 8.	
	,, 18.
	Sep. 23.
Oct. 6*.	
	Nov. —.
	,, 16.
Nov. —.	
Dec. 6*.	
	Dec. 31.
1791.	
	Jan. 28.
Feb. 7.	
	Feb. 13.
	March 26.
	,, 30.
	April 6.
April 11.	
	,, 30.
May —.	
	May 3.
	July 12.
	Aug. 27.
	Sep. 22.
Oct. 26*.	Oct. 26.
1792.	
Jan. 14*.	
	Jan. 25.
Feb. 3*.	
	April —.
	May 4.
	June 16.
	July 17.
	,, 26.

B.	D.
1792.	
Aug. 22.	
	Aug. 30.
	Sep. 23.
Sep. 24.	
Oct. —	
	Nov. 5.
Dec. 6.	
	Dec. 30.
„ 31.	
1793.	
	March 16.
Spring*.	
	June 25.
June —*.	
	Aug. 6.
Aug. 25*.	
	Sep. 10.
Dec. 15.	
1794.	
	Feb. 14.
March 13*.	

B.	D.
1794.	
	March 21.
	May 12.
	June 12.
June 25.	
	Sep. 6.
Sep. —*.	
Oct. 29*.	
Dec. 20.	
1795.	
	Jan. 12.
April —*.	
1796.	
Jan. 31.	
July 10.	

CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN

ROBERT BURNS AND MRS. DUNLOP

"Of all the friendships," says Gilbert Burns, "which Robert acquired in Ayrshire and elsewhere, none seemed more agreeable to him than that of Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop, nor any which has been more uniformly and constantly exerted in behalf of him and his family, of which, were it proper, I could give many instances. Robert was on the point of setting out for Edinburgh before Mrs. Dunlop had heard of him. About the time of my brother's publishing in Kilmarnock, she had been afflicted with a long and severe illness, which had reduced her mind to the most distressing state of depression. In this situation, a copy of the printed *Poems* was laid on her table by a friend, and happening to open on 'The Cotter's Saturday Night,' she read it over with the greatest pleasure and surprise; the poet's description of the simple cottagers operating on her mind like the charm of a powerful exorcist, expelling the demon *ennui*, and restoring her to her wonted inward harmony and satisfaction. Mrs. Dunlop sent off a person express to Mossgiel, distant fifteen or sixteen miles, with a very obliging letter to my brother, desiring him to send her half a dozen copies of his *Poems*, if he had them to spare, and begging he would do her the pleasure of calling at Dunlop House as soon as convenient. This was the beginning of a correspondence which ended only with the poet's life. (Nearly) the last use he made of his pen was writing a short letter to this lady a few days before his death."

The following letter, of which the last paragraph is now printed for the first time from the poet's manuscript, is unquestionably the earliest of Burns to Mrs. Dunlop, written in reply to the "express" mentioned by Gilbert. The exact date, the 15th of November, is also now fixed for the first time, and throws back for a day or two the precise period of the poet's resolution to go to Edinburgh. (See *Chambers*, 1896 edition, vol. i. p. 444):—

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP at Dunlop House.
(With a parcel.)

Madam—I am truly sorry I was not at home yesterday when I was so much honored with your order for my copies, and incomparably more so by the handsome compliments you are pleased to pay my poetic abilities. I am fully persuaded that there is not any class of mankind so feelingly alive to the titillations of applause as the Sons of Parnassus; nor is it easy to conceive how the heart of the poor Bard dances with rapture when those, whose character in life gives them a right to be polite judges, honor him with their approbation.

Had you been thoroughly acquainted with me, Madam, you could not have touched my darling heart-chord more sweetly, than by noticing my attempts to celebrate your illustrious ancestor, the SAVIOUR OF HIS COUNTRY—

Great patriot hero! ill-requited Chief!

The first books I met with in my early years, which I perused with pleasure, were the *Lives* of Hannibal, and Sir William Wallace. For several of my earlier years, I had few other authors; and many a solitary hour have I stole out, after the laborious vocations of the day, to shed a tear over their glorious, but unfortunate story. In those boyish days, I remember in particular, being much struck with that part of Wallace's history where these lines occur—

Syne to the Leglen wood[1] when it was late
To make a silent and a safe retreat.

I chose a fine summer Sunday, the only day of the week in my power, and walked half a dozen miles to pay my respects to the "Leglen wood" with as much devout enthusiasm as ever Pilgrim did to Loretto; and as I explored every den and dell where I could suppose my heroic Countryman to have sheltered, I recollect

(for even then I was a Rhymer) that my heart glowed with a wish to be able to make a song on him equal to his merits.

I have only been able to find you five copies: they are all I can command. I am thinking to go to Edinburgh in a week or two at farthest, to throw off a second Impression of my book; but on my return, I shall certainly do myself the honor to wait on you, and thank you in person for the oblidging notice you have been pleased to take of, Madam, your much indebted and very humble servt. ROBERT BURNS.

MOSSGIEL, 15*th Nov.* 1786.

(1) Leglen Wood is on the banks of the Ayr, near Auchencruive. It was from Mount Oliphant that Burns as a boy had walked to Leglen Wood.

Burns did not visit Dunlop at this time. He set out for Edinburgh on the 27th of November. On the 14th December Creech advertised the new edition, and Burns straightway sent copies of the subscription-sheet to his friends.

Here occurs the first break in the correspondence. Mrs. Dunlop must have replied to Burns's letter of the 15th; his answer, received by her on the 30th, must have been written on the 22nd or 23rd December, having been, as she says, a week on the road. Neither of those letters, so far as is known, is extant.

Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, care of Mr. Creech,
Bookseller, Cross, Edr.

DUNLOP, 30*th Dec.* 1786.

Sir—I have only this moment yours, and at the same moment the inclosed from Dr. Moore,[1] now of London, to whom I had sent a copy of your Poems as the most acceptable present I could make to that person whose taste I valued most and from whose friendship I have reaped most instruction as well as infinite pleasure. His literary knowledge, his fame as an author, his activity in befriending that merit of which his own mind is formed to feel the full force—all led me to believe I could not do so kind a thing to Mr. Burns as by introducing him to Mr. Moore, whose keen passions must at once admire the poet, esteem the moralist, and wish to be usefull to the author.

I am perfectly sensible 'tis not fair to shew a private letter from a friend, nor ought I perhaps to have done it now had I been

able with any propriety otherwise to convey the ideas it contains, and with which I really wished you acquainted. The lady he mentions, Miss Williams, has a very general acquaintance, and has been, I believe, obliged to Mr. Moore's introduction for part of the patronage she has met among the first people in Britain; even her praise will add ornament to merit far superiour to her own.

In the sequestered situation where I am placed, whatever my inclination, I am far distant from the power of being usefull to any one, so that I fear the half sheet you do me the honour to send me is but so much lost; however I shall try.

Meanwhile I would be glad to know whether you write the Dr., or call, as he desires, upon his son, Major John Moore,[2] now at the Palace of Hamilton; also that you would favour me with a copy of the song you celebrate so much in your book, where I would fain object to one word which I am glad to discover is not your own. I can wish you to catch no one thing from Thomson, unless it were the resolution with which he plucked up every one of those luxuriant weeds that will be rising in too rich a soil, and from which I would be glad to see you wholly exempt. But the word I allude to is *unhappy*.[3] When applied to Wallace it seems to me unsuited to the *patriot Hero* or the *patriot Bard*, and I flatter myself you feel it so. You will tell me "unhappy" only means "unsuccessful," but I confess myself hurt by the least dubiety of expression in one whose own ideas are clear and determinate, and whose language is so singularly nervous and beautiful. Besides, at a time when every inducement seems too weak to support public virtue, it might not be amiss to impress an idea upon our countrymen of the immediate advantage resulting from it—

> Sure He who deigns to guide, inspire and guard
> The patriot Hero and the patriot Bard
> Makes heartfelt happiness their first reward.

Coila tells you this of the second, and I dare venture to believe it of the first. If it is an error, 'tis one I should wish all my sons to cherish, as I'm afraid Heaven is a distant prospect for short-sighted mortals, who need a nearer goal to animate them in an unfashionable race, and a poem may light as many to it as a preaching.

> Charm'd with the beauties of a matchless line,
> I deem the spirit equally divine
> That leads to virtue by celestial lays,
> Or by immortal valour merits praise.

Though much I fear

> Where Indian gold and English manners reign,
> Wallace might fight and Burns may write in vain.

I address this to the care of Mr. Creech, to whom I shall return the names and number of copies wanted by me or my friend, so you need not attend to any former letter any of my family has wrote about them. You had better send Mr. Moore the proposal by the direction he gives, which will save postage, his son being a member of Parliament. I got the books you sent me and the letter, for which receive my thanks, and my money shall be payable on sight. But pray tell me, did you write nothing in the Leglen Wood that I may be favoured with a sight of when you come west? Or when will that be? If you drop me a line, direct it for "Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop, by Stewarton." Yours was a week on the way from being sent to Ayr. I hope that will create no risque of my being too late of returning my report to Mr. Creech. I should much regret disappointing those friends who have trusted to my securing them so great a pleasure. I am truly sorry I did not see you before you went to town, where I dread will be lost the Rural Bard produced in Ayrshire. You say no body is so sensible to praise as the Sons of Parnassus. If so, I fear you have got too strong a doze of it even for the most callous constitution, and all mankind are unco [pretty] weak and little to be trusted when all around are conspiring to spoil them and blow up their vanity—a passion which, while it debases the man, can never exalt the Poet, in whom the world are still more interested. You see you were not mistaken in thinking I really wished to serve the Rustic Bard, and to preserve him an honour to my country.—I am, Sir, your most humble servt.

FRAN. DUNLOP.

(1) Dr. John Moore, whose connection with Burns is well known. He was of the family of Mure of Rowallan; studied at Glasgow and Paris, served as a surgeon in the army, and practised in Glasgow. From 1772 to 1778 he travelled on the Continent with Douglas, eighth Duke of Hamilton, and was now settled in London cultivating letters. He wrote *Zeluco*, a novel; *A View of Society and Manners in France; Edward*, a novel, etc.

(2) Dr. Moore's more famous son (his eldest), afterwards Sir John, the hero of Corunna. He travelled on the Continent

with his father and the young Duke of Hamilton, entered the army in 1776, and when his friend the Duke raised the 82nd Regiment in 1778 he was made a captain-lieutenant in it. At this date he was on half pay and a member of Parliament, having been returned in 1784 through the Hamilton interest for the Linlithgow, Selkirk, Lanark, and Peebles group of burghs. When Mrs. Dunlop wrote he was apparently on a visit to the Duke at Hamilton.

(3) The second line of "The Cotter's Saturday Night" read in the first edition—

That stream'd thro' great, unhappy Wallace heart.

Burns defended the "improper epithet"; see *infra* his letter of the 15th January, and it was only in the 1793 edition that he altered the text to "Wallace's undaunted heart."

Postmark Jan. 15.

Ad. Mr. Robt. Burns, care of Mr. Creech,
Cross, Edr.

Dunlop, *9th Jan.* 1787.

Sir—I inclose your printing proposals. I am sorry a misfortune in my own family has prevented my attending to your interest as I think so much poetick merit deserves. I have always found the book only needed to be seen to be admired and subscribed for, but a sister's[1] death prevented my shewing it but to a very few of my friends. I know a gentleman in the East Indies, commanding the artillery at Patna. Could you find a way while you are in town to get a copy sent out to him, I know he has taste to relish its beauties, and at my desire would be active to display them in the Eastern world in case you should print a future edition. Perhaps you too know him; 'tis Captain Woodburn, born at Adamton Mill, by Ayr.

I hope you have wrote Mr. Moore. I again send you his letter to let you know how much he is in earnest your admirer, and I never knew any man so keen to serve those he takes a fancy to, and very few have so much in their power. But what will perhaps tempt you more than self-respecting views, he is one of the cleverest men in Britain, and owes more to nature than to his acquaintance with half the courts in Europe; so that few would reject his proffered correspondence. Meantime be so good as keep these letters of his till I see you, and don't mention them, as it would be disobliging both Lord Eglinton[2] and him, and

thereby hurting yourself as well as me for shewing them. But it shall not be my fault if you don't know what is said of you—I mean of your writings. I heard some lines repeated last day; I scrawled them over, believing them addressed to you, and put them as a wrapper round the inclosed subscription, which I send you for Mr. Creech. But be so good as pull off the cover before you deliver it. I daresay you would be shocked at an expression of the Doctor's, where he says he had taught many to admire your Poems, but he only means having, as a Scotsman, taught the English to read them, which I wish for the sake of your fame had been rendered less necessary by an enlarged glossary; that part is really defective. I find you are too busy to answer my questions, but no matter; I am glad of it, as I hope you are better employed every day doing honour to our country. Do you reprint the word I dislike? It will make me very happy that you forget it while next edition is in the press.—Adieu!

FRAN. DUNLOP.

(1) Sister-in-law's. Mrs. Dunlop had no sister.

(2) Dr. Moore introduced the Kilmarnock edition to the notice of Archibald, eleventh Earl of Eglinton (1726-96). Probably this second letter of Dr. Moore's which Mrs. Dunlop forwarded to Burns was a copy of the doctor's letter to the Earl.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

EDINBURGH, 15*th January* 1787.

Madam—Yours of the 9th current, which I am this moment honor'd with, is a deep reproach to me for ungrateful neglect. I will tell you the real truth, for I am miserably awkward at a fib. I wished to have written to Dr. Moore[1] before I wrote to you; but though every day since I received yours of Dec. 30th, the idea, the wish to write to him, has constantly pressed on my thoughts, yet I could not for my soul set about it. I know his fame and character, and I am one of "the sons of little men." To write him a mere matter-of-fact affair, like a merchant's order, would be disgracing the little character I have; and to write the author of *The View of Society and Manners* a letter of sentiment—I declare every artery runs cold at the thought. I shall try, however, to write to him to-morrow or next day. His kind interposition in my behalf I have already experienced, as a gentleman waited on me the other day, on the part of Lord Eglinton, with ten guineas by way of subscription for two copies of my next edition.

The word you object to in the mention I have made of my glorious countryman and your immortal ancestor, is indeed borrowed from Thomson; but it does not strike me as an improper epithet. I distrusted my own judgment on your finding fault with it, and applied for the opinion of some of the literati here, who honor me with their critical strictures, and they all allow it to be proper. The song you ask I cannot recollect, and I have not a copy of it. I have not composed any thing on the great Wallace, except what you have seen in print, and the inclosed, which I will print in this edition. You will see I have mentioned some others of the name. When I composed my "Vision" long ago, I had attempted a description of Kyle,[2] of which the additional stanzas are a part, as it originally stood. My heart glows with a wish to be able to do justice to the merits of the "Saviour of his Country," which sooner or later I shall at least attempt.

You are afraid I shall grow intoxicated with my prosperity as a poet: alas! Madam, I know myself and the world too well. I do not mean any airs of affected modesty; I am willing to believe that my abilities deserve some notice; but in a most enlightened, informed age and nation, when poetry is and has been the study of men of the first natural genius, aided with all the powers of polite learning, polite books, and polite company—to be dragged forth to the full glare of learned and polite observation, with all my imperfections of awkward rusticity, and crude, unpolished ideas on my head—I assure you, Madam, I do not dissemble when I tell you I tremble for the consequences. The novelty of a poet in my obscure situation, without any of those advantages which are reckoned necessary for that character, at least at this time of day, has raised a partial tide of public notice which has borne me to a height where I am absolutely, feelingly certain, my abilities are inadequate to support me; and too surely do I see that time when the same tide will leave me, and recede perhaps as far below the mark of truth. I do not say this in the ridiculous affectation of self-abasement and modesty. I have studied myself, and know what ground I occupy; and, however a friend or the world may differ from me in that particular, I stand for my own opinion, in silent resolve, with all the tenaciousness of property. I mention this to you, once for all, to disburthen my mind, and I do not wish to hear or say more about it. But

> When proud fortune's ebbing tide recedes,

you will bear me witness, that when my bubble of fame was at the highest, I stood unintoxicated with the inebriating cup in my

hand, looking forward with rueful resolve to the time, when the blow of Calumny should dash it to the ground, with all the eagerness of vengeful triumph. . . .

Your patronising me and interesting yourself in my fame and character as a poet, I rejoice in; it exalts me in my own idea; and whether you can or cannot aid me in my subscription is a trifle. Has a paltry subscription-bill any charms to the heart of a bard, compared with the patronage of the descendant of the immortal Wallace? R. B.

(1) He did write on the 17th.

(2) The district of Ayrshire which embraces Ayr, Mossgiel, Lochlea, etc.

The enclosure mentioned in the preceding letter was the following stanzas from the "Vision":—

By stately tow'r, or palace fair,
Or ruins pendent in the air,
Bold stems of heroes, here and there,
I could discern;
Some seem'd to muse, some seem'd to dare,
With features stern.

My heart did glowing transport feel,
To see a race heroic[1] wheel,
And brandish round the deep-dyed steel,
In sturdy blows;
While, back-recoiling, seem'd to reel
Their suthron foes.

His Country's Saviour,[2] mark him well!
Bold Richardton's[3] heroic swell;
The chief, on Sark[4] who glorious fell
In high command;
And he whom ruthless fates expel
His native land.

There, where a sceptr'd Pictish shade
Stalk'd round his ashes lowly laid,[5]
I mark'd a martial race, pourtray'd
In colours strong:
Bold, soldier-featur'd, undismay'd,
They strode along.[6]

Thro' many a wild, romantic grove,[7]
Near many a hermit-fancied cove
(Fit haunts for friendship or for love,
In musing mood),
An aged Judge, I saw him rove,
Dispensing good.

With deep-struck, reverential awe,
The learnèd Sire and Son I saw:[8]
To Nature's God, and Nature's law
They gave their lore;
This, all its source and end to draw,
That, to adore.

Brydon's brave ward[9] I well could spy,
Beneath old Scotia's smiling eye;
Who call'd on Fame, low standing by,
To hand him on,
Where many a patriot-name on high
And hero shone.

(1) The Wallaces.—*B.*

(2) William Wallace.—*B.*

(3) Adam Wallace of Richardton (Riccarton), cousin to the immortal preserver of Scottish independence.—*B.* This Wallace, and not the great Sir William, was Mrs. Dunlop's ancestor.

(4) Wallace, laird of Craigie, who was second in command, under Douglas, Earl of Ormond, at the famous battle on the banks of Sark, fought in 1448. The glorious victory was principally owing to the judicious conduct and intrepid valour of the gallant Laird of Craigie, who died of his wounds after the action.—*B.*

(5) Coilus, King of the Picts, from whom the district of Kyle is said to take its name, lies buried, as tradition says, near the family seat of the Montgomeries of Coilsfield, where his burial place is still shown.—*B.* The mound, marked by a few trees, was opened on 29th May 1837, and two sepulchral urns were found.

(6) The Montgomeries of Coilsfield. The younger sons of the family were in the army.—*B.*

(7) Barskimming, the seat of the Lord Justice-Clerk.—*B.* Sir Thomas Miller of Glenlee, who became Lord President of the Court of Session in 1788, and died in the following year.

(8) Catrine, the seat of the late Doctor and present Professor Stewart. —*B.* Dr. Matthew Stewart (1717-85) was Professor of Mathematics in the University of Edinburgh. His son Dugald (1753-1828) succeeded his father in the Chair of Mathematics in 1775, and exchanged it ten years later for that of Moral Philosophy.

(9) Colonel Fullarton.—*B.* Colonel William Fullarton of Fullarton in Ayrshire; born 1754; educated at Edinburgh; travelled under the care of Patrick Brydone (1741-1818), author of *A Tour in Sicily and Malta.* Fullarton entered the army, raised Fullarton's Light Horse, sat in Parliament for Ayrshire from 1796 to 1803, and was subsequently Governor of Trinidad. He wrote an *Account of Agriculture in Ayrshire* and a *View of English Interests in India.*

Mrs. Dunlop here enters the lists as a critic of Burns's writings. Encouraged doubtless by the notice he had taken

of her objection to the application of the epithet "unhappy" to her "ancestor," she ventured to attack him on the ground of the impropriety of his language. She did so at first with sufficient delicacy, hinting her objections with a reserve by no means inconsistent with the freedom of speech she used with him later as to his domestic relations.

Ad. Mr. Robt. Burns, Mr. Creech's, Bookseller,
opposite the Cross, Edinburgh.

Dunlop, *Feb. 26th*, 1787.

Sir—I sit down at Lady Wallace's[1] desire to write you for four copies more and two for another lady, which, added to the list I sent you before for Mr. Creech, makes in whole forty-five of this, and five you sent me of the first impression of your Poems —in all fifty. I beg you may take the trouble of securing them for me, and sending them as soon as printed by Gabriel Watson, carrier from Edr. to Glasgow, directed for me at Dunlop, where I still hope you will let me have the pleasure of seeing you; but hould anything prevent that, I beg you may write me how and where to send your money. Indeed I am now afraid my friend Mr. Moore will rob us of you altogether by persuading you to go to London. You see I have always some fear on your account; indeed you have made me heartily ashamed of the last I exprest. Can you forgive any one, who after reading your works, could entertain a suspicion so injurious to the author? Yet—I don't know how—I believe we are so used to consider poetry as fiction that I confess reading the most compleat volume ever fell in my hand in verse did not impress my mind with that esteem for the author which was the instantaneous effect of my reading your letter in prose. The sentiments were delicate, noble and well-exprest, and were particularly addrest to myself. Then you so genteelly compliment me with the name of your Patroness that you half persuade me you were in earnest, and tempt me to avail myself of the right the word confers to tell you the truth with regard to your book—at least what I think so.

You ought to take off a few patches which consummate beauty has no use for, which in a polite and enlightened age are seldom wore, and which a delicate, manly mind cannot regret the want of. Forgive my saying that every undecency is below you, and sinks the voice of your fame by putting to silence your female admirers. You will one day think so yourself, and curse every allusion which forbids a modest, lovely girl receiving as the most acceptable

present a young lover could make her Burns's poems. Would not your heart feel delight in believing the bright fire of your genius a more favourable light for discovering the mutual kindling eye than the moon's wan, unwarming beam? But this is a pleasure you proclude yourself by a few ill-chosen lines. A lady dare not acknowledge acquaintance with any beauty which the world must know she has met in bad company, and unless you pare off these fringes, when once novelty and fashion cease to sanctify your name, no woman under fifty will pronounce it, and by that time you will not care whether she does or not; but I hope you have already made this sacrifice to the young Graces.

When I read the Epitaph of the best Bard ever adorned my country, I do it without regret, since his confession graces his tombstone, and I, having full faith in his resurrection, trust he shall rise again freed from those

> thoughtless follies laid him low
> And stain'd his name.

Nor would I have this purely owing to prudent, cautious self-controul, but to the refinement of his latter state. Once more forgive me. Your glory became mine from the moment you declared yourself the historian of my race. Henceforward I shall blush for every impropriety you utter, and drop a tear on every blot that can stain your paper. Formerly I would only have turned the leaf and lost the remembrance of the only fault amid innumerable pleasures and instructions, more delightfully blended by you from the 87th to the 181st page than ever I met them anywhere else. There are incomparable touches through the whole, but in that compass they are uniformly sublime, tenderly affecting or chearfully amusing beyond expression, and uninterrupted by anything malice itself could cavil at. Even the striking beauties in the rest of the book have hardly power to draw one out of that enchanting circle, at least till it is perfectly imprinted on the memory. Indeed should I take a ramble to the Holy Fair, visit J. L., take leave of the Masons, read the inimitable Epitaph of the Bard,[2] and stop a moment wherever genuine beauty demanded notice, there would be no getting home again in the compass of a letter, nor should I leave room for a question which, though I have no right to ask, I am much interested in. Have your friends been able to point out any future plan for you; or, as Pope said, shall Homer provide for his children; or, if so, in what line would you wish it? I suspect a military one, though without any other reason but the red berries you add to the beautiful

garland of the tenth Muse,[3] who, like the tenth wave of her seas, overtops all the rest that went before her. You have already told us "Cash your pouches wad na bide in." This makes it doubly needful for you to form a wish, and communicate it to some one that could assist its completion, as there is no time they would find it so easie as when the world are in the eager eve of expectation. Just before the longed-for publication, or at the moment it is first seen and in every mouth, would be the time some active friend might drop some useful hint to forward any favourite scheme which you thought could make you happy. Perhaps Mr. Moore might be that lucky friend. He is in the scene of fortune, and no one would have more pleasure in setting a scaffold to build yours, or more address in knowing where or how to place it. Should an opportunity offer, at least, his good sense, knowledge of the world, and enthusiastick fondness for genius, will make him a good adviser. He is much pleased with your correspondence, and will, as well as I, like you the better for thinking of propping up an old tree which once o'ershadowed the plain just when the earth shaken from its roots makes others fly its fall, but as it has frequently threatened this before, I don't yet doubt with your help it may still flourish a thousand years longer. At any rate your good inclination does you honour, and gives me pleasure to suppose what such a genius may make of such a subject, as I am proud to say my forefathers have provided for the bards and historians of Scotland. I meant to return my thanks, which, as you like it better, shall rhyme,[4] and probably not be worth the groat they will cost you in postage; but no matter. Only, I beg you may receive and treat it as the private letter of a friend by keeping it to yourself. I ought to have told you that numbers at London are learning Scots to read your book, but they don't like your Address to the King, and say it will hurt the sale of the rest. Of this I am no judge. I can only say there is no piece in the whole I would vote to leave out, tho' severals where I would draw my pen over lines, or spill the ink-glass over a verse, from the esteem which, though I have never had the pleasure of his acquaintance, I nevertheless entertain for the author, and the interested wish that the pen which celebrates my chief should be unspotted as well as superexcellent. Adieu. Forgive the length of this, and believe me, Sir, your obliged humble sert.

FRAN. DUNLOP.

(1) The Dowager Lady Wallace of Craigie, Mrs. Dunlop's stepmother.

(2) "The Holy Fair," "Epistles to J. Lapraik," "The Farewell," and "A Bard's Epitaph."

(3) "Coila" of "The Vision."

> Green, slender, leaf-clad holly-boughs
> Were twisted, gracefu', round her brows.

(4) Verses enclosed on separate sheet beginning—

> To Robt. Burns.
>
> To you, kind Bard, my warmest thanks I send,
> My country's poet and her saviour's friend.

Ad. Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop, Stewarton.

Edinburgh, *March 22nd*, 1787.

Madam—I read your letter with watery eyes. A little, very little while ago, *I had scarce a friend but the stubborn pride of my own bosom;* now I am distinguished, patronised, befriended by you. Your friendly advices, I will not give them the cold name of criticisms, I receive with reverence. I have made some small alterations in what I before had printed. I have the advice of some very judicious friends among the literati here, but with them I sometimes find it necessary to claim the privilege of thinking for myself. The noble Earl of Glencairn, to whom I owe more than to any man, does me the honor of giving me his strictures; his hints, with respect to impropriety or indelicacy, I follow implicitly.

You kindly interest yourself in my future views and prospects; there I can give you no light. It is all

> Dark as was Chaos ere the infant sun
> Was roll'd together, or had try'd his beams
> Athwart the gloom profound.

The appellation of a Scottish bard is by far my highest pride; to continue to deserve it is my most exalted ambition. Scottish scenes and Scottish story are the themes I could wish to sing. I have no dearer aim than to have it in my power, unplagued with the routine of business, for which heaven knows I am unfit enough, to make leisurely pilgrimages through Caledonia; to sit on the fields of her battles; to wander on the romantic banks of her rivers; and to muse by the stately towers or venerable ruins, once the honored abodes of her heroes.

But these are all Utopian thoughts: I have dallied long

enough with life; 'tis time to be in earnest. I have a fond, an aged mother to care for; and some other bosom-ties perhaps equally tender. Where the individual only suffers by the consequences of his own thoughtlessness, indolence or folly, he may be excusable; nay, shining abilities, and some of the nobler virtues may half sanctify a heedless character; but where God and nature have entrusted the welfare of others to his care; where the trust is sacred, and the ties are dear; that man must be far gone in selfishness, or strangely lost to reflection, whom these connexions will not rouse to exertion.

I guess that I shall clear between two and three hundred pounds by my authorship; with that sum I intend, so far as I may be said to have any intention, to return to my old acquaintance, the plough, and, if I can meet with a lease by which I can live, to commence farmer. I do not intend to give up poetry: being bred to labour, secures me independence, and the muses are my chief, sometimes have been my only, enjoyment. If my practice second my resolution, I shall have principally at heart the serious business of life; but while following my plough, or building up my shocks, I shall cast a leisure glance to that dear, that only feature of my character, which gave me the notice of my country, and the patronage of a Wallace.

Thus, honored madam, I have given you the bard, his situation, and his views, native as they are in his own bosom.

ROBT. BURNS.

P.S.[1]—I have to-day corrected the last proof sheet of my poems, and have now only the glossary and subscribers' names to print. Printing this last is much against my will, but some of my friends whom I do not chuse to thwart will have it so. I have both a second and third Edition going on, as the second was begun with too small a number of copies. The whole I have printed is three thousand. Would the profits of that afford it, with rapture I would take your hint of a military life, as the most congenial to my feelings and situation of any other, but, "what is wanting cannot be numbered." R. B.

(1) This postscript is a "find" of twofold value. It reveals the fact that Burns seriously thought of a military career, as Mrs. Dunlop suggested in the previous letter, and might have tried for a commission if the profits of the Edinburgh edition had been larger. Secondly, this P.S. confirms

the theory that the existence of two separate impressions of the Edinburgh edition, known respectively as the "Stinking" and the "Skinking" (from the spelling of a word in "To a Haggis"), is owing to the fact that the demand much exceeded the supply first printed, and that the types had to be "set up" again; whence arose the variations of the "Stinking" impression, some of them Burns's own corrections, some the printer's vagaries.

To Burns.

Dunlop, 29*th March* 1787.

Sir—I have read over yours with as much study and attention as if the plan had been for myself instead of you, and every time I look it over I more and more approve the ideas it contains. Yet I fear like the women you have only exprest your judgment in the letter and your inclination in the postscript, and see plainly that the Muse's garland did not deceive me. Indeed in your particular situation a military line wears several attractions, not wholly to be slighted, but which would be much too dearly purchased by laying out your all for an ensigncy which, when you had it, could not make you happy, placed in a rank you could difficultly support, unable to assist a mother or a friend with your purse, or comfort them with your presence, harassed and tost about, torn from those you loved, and condemned to a slavish dependence, a subaltern obedience to the capricious orders of petulant, ignorant boys, who, though your inferiours in everything valuable, would despise talents they had not knowledge to discover or taste to relish, and pretend to overlook you were your hair worse drest or your hat worse cocked than their own. Indeed, should any of the nobles of the land present you with a pair of colours, the case would be very different, but I hope and trust you will never think of buying into the army, unless you can command at least £250 more than the £400 which is the regulated price. I am sure I am right in this, and, if I saw you, could convince you by a thousand reasons. At any rate the pomp of war is more for poetry than practice, and although warriors may be heros, peace soldiers are mostly powdered monkies. So you see, if it will not do, I comfort you like the tod with the sour plums.[1]

Now as to what you mention of the farm, I do think it the most manly, spirited, independent scheme you can form. Rural scenes, domestick duties, our native manners and our early friends are the rational charm of life, and amid these the Muses and Graces must delight to dwell, but may not even this rob Ayrshire

of her native Bard? I am sorry to say so, but I have been told farms are to be found more improvable in Orkney or the North Highlands than in the Low Country, and rented cheaper. Of this you could be informed by Mr. Balfour, the writer, at whose house you were, and who, as well as his father-in-law, admire you much, and would be happy to give you every information you could desire. Yet if (as I hope) no interest can bribe you from your native plains, where we would sometimes have a chance of seeing you, there is possibly as good to be found on the estates of Loudoun, Miss Scot's, Commodore Stewart, and many more who would certainly give you at least a preference on equal terms to what others might offer, and I hope you will not fix elsewhere without coming west and looking at these. Besides, if we must lose you, there might be other plans talked over, either for home or abroad. Indeed, first when your Book reached Edr., Mr. Smith,[2] Commissioner of the Customs, suggested a thing which he thought might be procured, and which he said was just what he would have wished for himself had he been in narrow circumstances — being a Salt Officer. Their income is from £30 to £40, their duty easie, independent, and free from that odium or oppression attached to the Excise. He has through life been a friend to unfriended merit, has great fame in the world as an author, both his *Theory of Moral Sentiment* and *Wealth of Nations* being much applauded. He was one of those first held forth your name forcibly to the public at Edr. when very few had seen your Book, and my son told me was the person he heard take the most interest in your future prospects, wishing to procure you leizure to write, which he said was all you wanted to insure your figure and fortune. He lately complained that he had asked it, but could not get a sight of you. Here I think you have been wrong, as well as in printing names, to accumulate expense and hurt yourself, without serving any body. Indeed I should think the accumulation monstrous. I hoped the cost would not have exceeded two shillings a volume.

I have a favour to beg of you that you will deliver the inclosed out of your own hand with my compts. to Mr. Smith, and at same time thank him for the good will he exprest towards you. Excuse my giving you this trouble. I would not had I not believed him one of the best, and found him one of the most agreeable men in the world, so much that thirty years has not effaced the remembrance of the two first days I past with him before I knew who he was, and before travel, high company, and high affluence, had given that *fion* [Fr. = finishing touch] to his character it must

now possess. Besides I am interested in the business I wrote about. Should this Salt plan, mentioned before the world's opinion could be known, still have wherewithal to please you, you may introduce it, and beg Mr. Smith would be so good as instruct you in the proper forms of application, and where they should be made, and let me know, that I may see if I could be of any use, though never so little. But you must not throw away on me the flattering title of Patroness, fit to decorate a duchess, for tho' nobody can wish genius better, my wings have been sore clipt, and are too weak and short to shelter this now unprotected brood Nature has committed to my charge. I am far too little conversant in the world to matron the Muses with due splendor and propriety such as their luster and yours would demand to introduce you favourably to the public—I mean for your interest; your fame wants no help, nor I any bribe to my vanity to inspire the highest admiration of the poems and the highest esteem for their author. Nor shall I leave anything untried I can think of to help your plans forward, if you let me know them, well knowing

> That though the wished-for end's denied,
> Yet while the busy means are ply'd,
> They bring their own reward.

Lord Glencairn's conduct to you would raise my opinion of him had it not been, like my stature, many years ago come to its pitch. Yet I wish he may not bear too tender a hand in pruning your bays. By the by, I perhaps mistake where you met Mr. Balfour, but he is married to a sister's daughter of Dr. Moore's, and I am sure you have seen him either at home, or I think with Mr. Draper. I thank you for the care of my book, but have not yet got it. Adieu. I daresay you are tired of my pen, but I can honestly say nothing has afforded me so much pleasure for five years last past as yours, and that I am on that account, Sir, your much obliged and obedient humble servt.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) The Fox (*Scot.* tod) and the Grapes.

(2) It is an entire revelation that Adam Smith, the author of *The Wealth of Nations*, took so much interest in Burns as even to suggest that he might become a salt officer in the service of the Customs at a commencing salary of £35 a year. In the winter 1786-87 he was dangerously ill, and immediately on recovery went to London to consult John Hunter.

Ad. Mr. Robt. Burns, at Mr. Creech's, Bookseller,
opposite the Cross, Edinburgh.

14th April 1787.

Dr. Sir—I received lately the book and head[1] you were so good as send, and which I accept with pride and pleasure as an evidence of attention from one on whose remembrance I set the highest value. Every time I look at it will more excite my wish to deserve the esteem of the giver, an acquisition from which, had we lived nearly in the same age of the world, I might have reaped much satisfaction and advantage, but to which the circumstance of being a stranger is perhaps at present my strongest claim, except you admit that of truly relishing the expression of your pen, and pouring forth my unavailing wishes for every good that can crown the head or heart by which it is directed.

I read your advertisement with anxious impatience to see what you *have* and what you *have not* printed, but before that can be satisfied, must trouble you with a great deal of business to transact for me. You will say a Bard is unfit for business, and ought not to be teased with it, but I rather believe a genius like yours will have pleasure in doing for a friend what they would perhaps neglect for themselves, and I hope you allow me a place in your list, at least till you discover some reason to exclude me. What I am now to beg is that you will receive from Mr. Creech and pay for 45 volumes I wrote you formerly about, and dispose of them as follows:—

Send to London, addrest to Dr. Moore, Clifford Street, Burlington Gardens, to the care of P. Cadell, Bookseller in the Strand, 5 copies, one of them marked for Miss Williams.

To Glasgow, by Gabriel Watson, carrier for that place, who is to be heard of in the Grass Market, and leaves town twice a week, 12 copies (addrest to John Campbell,[2] Esqr. of Clathick, Glasgow).

6 for Mr. George Macintosh,[3] Merchant, Glasgow.

Please write on these two last parcels "to be payed to Robt. Duncan, carrier from Dunlop, who will call for the money."

Send also by the same Gabriel Watson, directed for me at Dunlop, to the care of Robt. Duncan, carrier for Dunlop, 21 copies. (These are for Mrs. Steuart, Mrs. Cunninghame, Lady Wallace and my own family, as marked in the list I sent you.)

And send by a porter 1 copy addrest for Miss Fanny Dunlop,[4] Mrs. Balfour's Boarding School, Carrubber's Close, Edr.

I inclose you £15 for this purpose, and in acknowledgment of your sending me the last numbers of your first edition. I wish I could add a cypher to it, and I should still be in your debt

Withdraw the subscription-paper from Mr. Creech, and send it with the books, and should the two gentlemen in Glasgow have got theirs already, keep the price of them till you and I meet. This much for business. Drop me a line by post, saying whether you will execute it as soon as this reaches you, and whether you got my last, which I am sure you would think a great inconsistency. However, your mention of your mother really altered my ideas considerably of that line in which I formerly believed you might have been happy, and made me sorry I had mentioned it. Have you seen Mr. Smith, or how do you like him? Perhaps the world has spoilt him. I never saw him since he went abroad with the Duke of Buccleugh a great many years ago, when I think he would have pleased any body. Adieu. I am ashamed to write you so stupid a letter, but what is to be looked for from one who has speel'd [climbed] five and forty a dozen years ago, and knows "the tears all and fears all of dire-declining age"? Once more farewell. FRAN. DUNLOP.

(1) Probably an impression of the Beugo engraving prefixed to the Edinburgh edition.

(2) A leading Glasgow citizen, merchant, banker, Dean of Guild, original member of the Chamber of Commerce.

(3) A prominent merchant and tanner; concerned with the better-known David Dale in bringing to Scotland Papillon, the Frenchman, who introduced Turkey-red dyeing.

(4) Probably Frances Magdalene, Mrs. Dunlop's niece, who married John Dunlop, her son.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

EDINBURGH, 15*th April* 1787.

Madam—There is an affectation of gratitude which I dislike. The periods of Johnson and the pauses of Sterne may hide a selfish heart. For my part, madam, I trust I have too much pride for servility, and too little prudence for selfishness. I have this moment broken open your letter, but

> Rude am I in speech,
> And therefore little shall I grace my cause
> In speaking for myself;[1]

so I shall not trouble you with any fine speeches and hunted figures. I shall just lay my hand on my heart, and say, I hope I shall ever have the truest, the warmest, sense of your goodness.

I come abroad in print, for certain, on Wednesday. Your orders I shall punctually attend to; only, by the way, I must tell

you that I was paid before for Dr. Moore's and Miss Williams's copies, through the medium of Commissioner Cochrane in this place, but that we can settle when I have the honor of waiting on you.

Dr. Smith was just gone to London the morning before I received your letter to him. R. B.

(1) Shakespeare's *Othello*, act i. scene 3.

The new edition came out on the 21st, and Mrs. Dunlop's copies were apparently despatched to her post-haste. But, alas! the "few patches" which, in her letter of 26th February she had, with sufficient delicacy, suggested that he should "take off," were allowed to remain, and the Patroness was highly offended.

Ad. Mr. Robt. Burns, Mr. Creech's, Bookseller,
opposite the Cross, Edinburgh.

Dunlop, 29*th April* 1787.

To say your bardship's in the wrong
My skill may weel be doubted,
But facts are chiels that winna ding,
An' downa be disputed.

I see you have a will of your own as well as any woman, and perhaps, like us, not always a great deal can be said for its being a goodwill, and I from self-conceit perhaps am apt to believe you had better taken a letter of mine as all your own on the present occasion. I indeed cannot help flattering myself that, had you reposed the same implicit trust in me, I should have made better use of it than your noble friend has done. At least I'm sure I would have made more, and to convince you that you would have acted more free from error by strict conformity to female rule, I shall only mention one instance as the only one still in your power to rectify, and therefore the only one worth pointing out to your knowledge, where, by following literally the path I pointed, you would have been right instead of wrong. The four copies I desired you to send here were subscribed for by my father's widow, who is now in my house, and still expects them. The lady[1] to whom you gave four is no subscriber, was once my son's wife, but has done my family the honour to renounce all connection with us by a legal and public deed, so that I (at least) can no longer consider her as Lady Wallace, or consent to her pocketing her predecessor's right to these volumes for which I sent my friend's money and begged your care.

I have got your letter and parcel not ten minutes, but already

run over all the new and the old too, to see what you had and still more what you had not printed, and though I admire some things and like others, yet

> While with truth and pleasure I commend,
> I blame with all the candour of a friend

truly interested in your fame. Yet I will not trouble you with a single remark. You have rebuked my "friendly advice," and to cold criticizm I am wholly inadequate. You have, I suppose, read Dr. Moore's Travels. You will find there that the French commend their King for those virtues they wish him to possess. I don't know how this may do with monarchs, but I believe it does not answer infallibly with every poet. I had fixed a certain hope (of I will not tell you what) on your reappearance in the world, but hope is with me a compass seldom true. Yet I found something that put it in my head to read my Bible, and it just opened at the parable of the man who, when he had washed and purified his house, took unto him seven spirits worse than himself, and, behold! the second state of that man was worse than the first. I do not know why I repeat this, for I am quite out of humour at the moment, and had rather scold than string texts, durst I assume that liberty, or vent my spleen on one who has so elegantly contributed to my pleasure at a time when my soul was not enough alive to have relished aught but the most exquisite entertainment. I in your Bill of Fare found a finely varied feast. To-day my stomach is strong enough to be delighted with a Haggis, but does not like all the *entre-mets* with which it is accompanied. Forgive my saying so; 'tis no affront to Edina, Roslin Castle, the introductive verses to the Bridges or their conclusion, the Winter Night, etc. etc.; but I grudge the honour of your name to half-felt or local merit, and wish all such consigned to your poor shadow Campbell,[2] shoemaker in Kilmarnock, should he not get on in the Church. Adieu! Accept my best wishes for your prosperity in whatever line whim, judgment, or fortune may throw you, being with sincerity, worth all the courtly phrase of fashionable politeness, Sir, your admirer and obliged humble servt.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Burns was at this time so little advanced in intimacy with the Dunlop family that he confused the Lady Wallace for whom Mrs. Dunlop had ordered four copies of the new edition, and who was the widow of the late baronet of Craigie, with the dashing young Lady Wallace whom he

met in Edinburgh, the wife of Mrs. Dunlop's second son, Thomas, the self-styled baronet. There was no love lost between Mrs. Dunlop and her "fast" daughter-in-law, and the mistake the poet made in sending to the latter the copies ordered for the dowager no doubt aggravated the offence he had committed in disregarding his patroness's advice in respect of bowdlerising.

(2) Born at Kilmarnock, *circa* 1761. Published in 1787, through Wilson (of the Burns Kilmarnock edition), *Poems on Several Occasions*, and became pastor of a Burgher congregation at Stockbridge, near Dunbar.

EXTRACT

EDINBURGH, 30*th April* 1787.

. . . Your criticisms, madam, I understand very well, and could have wished to have pleased you better. You are right in your guess that I am not very amenable to counsel. Poets, much my superiors, have so flattered those who possessed the adventitious qualities of wealth and power, that I am determined to flatter no created being, either in prose or verse.

I set as little by . . . (kings?), lords, clergy, critics, etc., as all these respective gentry do by my bardship. I know what I may expect from the world by and by: illiberal abuse, and perhaps contemptuous neglect.

I am happy, madam, that some of my own favorite pieces are distinguished by your particular approbation. For my "Dream," which has unfortunately incurred your loyal displeasure, I hope in four weeks, or less, to have the honor of appearing at Dunlop, in its defence, in person. ROBT. BURNS.

Ad. to Creech; that crossed out, and "Care of Mr. Ainslie, Edinburgh," written in; then that crossed out, and "To be left at the Post-Office, Dumfries;" above all "Returned from Dunse."

DUNLOP, 21*st May* 1787.

Sir—I have this moment yours with the books. I indeed received it with singular pleasure, and sincerely thank you, not so much even for saying you mean to see me, as for letting me see that people of the best hearts and first abilities can write as peevishly as myself, and perhaps as little know wherefore they do so. For certainly, whatever cause I had to be out of humour when I wrote you last, you have none to be chagrined at a world that have hitherto done you ample justice. Even should you meet

abuse, the more the better. Nothing does authors so much good, as everybody agrees with Pope that

> Envy will merit like its shade pursue,
> And like the shadow prove the substance true.

Nor is it in the power of spleen to destroy the fame attendant on works which must please while sensibility or taste inhabit the earth, and our language is understood in any corner of the world. So long as an author you must be valued, esteemed and carest by the men, I fancy you were conscious your vanity could not bear praise from the ladies, and therefore determined to shut their mouths entirely, in which you may perhaps succeed too well.

You may think my writing just now superfluous, but I am sensible I must appear from my last rather capricious, and a real desire not to forfeit esteem I set much value upon leads me to explain in some measure the "moving why" I was displeased, for indeed it was not my loyalty nor your Address to the King was at bottom. 'Twas a sort of indignity to my sex which I had warmly wished you to omit. You say you will flatter no created being. I am sure you have not flattered me, though it was greatly in your power. On the contrary you severely mortified me, nor did I ever in my life feel more degraded in my own eye than by the utter contempt you have shown for those hints which it cost me a great deal to give, and which I now heartily wish I had let alone. Friendly advice when wholly overlooked makes one feel themselves mean, officious, and in the present case indelicate; and I fretted at you because I was discontented with myself. Then I had another reason. I pleased my Scotch pride with thinking I could hold up your volume to an English, nay to the most polite Frenchman, and defied his nation to teach their best instructed, most polished nobleman to equal a Scots peasant in genius, sentiment, purity of expression. Think what an exquisite pleasure you might have afforded me at the small expense of half a dozen blots, or rather half that number, cast over what your own good sense must acknowledge to be improprieties, only excusable in a Kilmarnock edition of the dawnings of authors debarred the converse of the world and content with wit in her very worst attire, before her face was washed, because the author had never seen her drest. But how shall I excuse to myself (for I sincerely wish to do it) a repetition of the old and an addition of new indecencies to which you set your face and my name, and which you print after so long a residence in the polite world, and, what is worse, after writing letters that bespeak an enlarged mind susceptible of the most

delicate ideas and brightened with superiour acquirements, which in your situation reflect a tenfold luster on their owner? 'Twas this interested me so much in your interest and your fame as to speak out where a woman ought perhaps to have been silent. I never criticized *two* words in your work from any other motive, and I fear your obstinacy will hurt yourself still more than it does me, tho' I assure you that is more than you can believe, for it has annihilated a scheme I was very fond of trying for your advantage, and in which I flattered myself I should have been able to engage a number of ladies so respectable that I durst not now offend them with the mention of your name. I have tormented myself, convinced as I am that yours are not errors of ignorance, guessing why you were so tenacious of them. Was it a perversion of taste or a corruption of heart made you stick so fast to what was so unjustifiable? You answer all my doubts in one word; it is that you have chosen an uncommon model for your sentiments. I confess it is with all its faults a noble one, and I believe few can help forgiving Satan that pride which prevents his either retracting or confessing his guilt in consideration of that bitter remorse which wrings his great spirit with all the agonies of useless contrition—a feeling I shall not grudge you a little of for suspecting me of so pitiful a thought as to wish your sacrificing one honest sentiment of your soul to lord or lady, man, woman, or child, or even giving up a *Dream* to party spirit. However, I am glad you have imagined I blamed the "Dream," since you resolve to appear in its defence. Now you see I have been buffeting you all this while to excuse myself for my bad humour. You will say 'tis an odd apology to repeat a fault and make it worse, but I do this in imitation of you. I shall likewise in perfect sincerity of heart adopt a courtly phrase I dislike from you, being wholly in earnest when I say I have the honor to be, Sir, your much indebted, humble servt. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Why did you leave out the beautiful motto prefixt to your first volume? I would have put it under your head had I been allowed the honour of a vote. I have been told Voltaire read all his manuscripts to an old woman, and printed nothing but what she approved. I wish you would name me to her office. I am quite qualified after being thirty-eight years a wife and the mother of two-and-twenty. And I will claim no wages but the liberty of burning what I don't like, or at least hiding it for six months, when, if at the end of that time, you were still extravagantly attached to it, I would be tempted to believe there was uncommon

merit, though I had never discovered it, in anything able to fix the unconstant mind of man so long, besides that my own would perhaps be changed much sooner. By the by, don't you think Ayrshire has great merit, and that they print with superiour taste and propriety at Kilmarnock? For instance, unless it was meant to illustrate a fact more suited to the metropolis, is not there more dignity in exalting the *Supreme Power* in capitals than in degrading the words to mean italicks, not to mention my *Davie* or my *Jean* and a thousand other instances? Even the great Ben Lomond sinks to a molehill when taken to town and put into the press. I trust, however, the great soul of the Bard, like that of the hero you are studying, shall always retain the faculty of expanding itself to its original elevation on getting clear out of Pandemonium, even supposing it has been a little deprest by the crowd and confinement of the city. Now, allow me to ask, is "Legislation placed beneath the monarch's feet"[1] a sentiment, or a literal description of the situation of the Throne in the Parliament House during the reign of the Stuarts? because, if the first, I am glad you did not write it till you went to Edr.; if the last, it seems to me beautifully taken the advantage of to strengthen a contrast every heart not steeled by prejudice, I think, must feel, and which you have hit off very pathetically. Farewell. I forgot to tell you that you had inspired a shoemaker [Campbell] at Kilmarnock, if not with the capability, at least with the idea of becoming poet. This to *vanity*, but it will be welcome intelligence to *benevolence* that you had put the public in so good humour that they gave a poor creature fourty pound to put him to school, for, I think, blacking paper. I would have given more for blacking shoes, had he made me a pair of good ones, than I would for his poem, though there is much goodness in it, as there may also be hereafter in his sermons. If they are decreed to save souls, you will have part in the merit, but it will go no length in settling my accompt. Adieu. I won't rob you of another groat while you stay in town, so forgive this long scrawl if ever you read this length, which I half doubt. Is your whole impression disposed of? A gentleman asked me last day if I thought he could get a few copies. I told him I did not know, but I should ask and tell him.

While they abuse me I will force them to esteem me with all my faults. J. J. Rousseau, I think, says this.

(1) Where once, beneath a monarch's feet,
Sat Legislation's sov'reign pow'rs.

Address to Edinburgh.

In May Burns toured in the south, as the numerous ad-

dresses on the foregoing letter show. He reached Mauchline on his "*éclatant* return" on 9th June, and thereafter saw Mrs. Dunlop for the first time and became intimate with her circle.

To Burns.

30th July 1787.

Dear Sir—As I sat amusing myself scribbling the above,[1] I was told you were seized with a fever. Tho' I hope this is not true, I could not forbear sending the bearer to ask for you, to assure you of my best wishes for your health and happiness. At same time, if my scrawl can amuse you in sickness or in health, if it can afford you a moment's pleasure to see how much your writings give me, it is at your service. But remember, at yours alone, for I know the world would not forgive me attempting to tack two lines together, nor even accept my want of success as any apology.

My daughter, who was taken ill the morning I saw you, has been in an alarming situation ever since. Yet that did not make me forget that you had half promised to come back again. I hope you will not forget it yourself; at any rate shall be glad to hear you were so well as to put it in your power. Lady Wallace, my son, and Major Moore join me in compts. to you.—Believe me, with great esteem, Sir, your most humble servt.

Fran. A. Dunlop.

(1) See Appendix C.

To Mrs. Dunlop.

[*August* 5 *or* 6, 1787.]

I am sure, madam, you have most effectually surprized me this morning. Send your servt. twenty miles to enquire for me!!! By all the towering flights of Pride; 'twas doing me an honor so far beyond my wildest expectation that for half a second the shadow of a Doubt eclipsed my belief, whether you might perhaps mean to burlesque me. I have indeed been ailing, but your verses have given my spirits a fillip for one day. Without any poetic licence, I assure you upon the honor of plain, unfettered, truth-delivering Prose, they are excellent. I have a long letter[1] to Dr. Moore just ready to put into the Post Office. It is on a subject you have done me the honor to interest yourself in, so if you dare face twenty pages of an epistle, a reading of it is at your service. I don't doubt but you will laugh at me; I know you will; and I insist on your taking that amusement at my expence, solely by yourself. I am not bound to contribute at so dear a rate to the diversion of the rest of the family. I have no

copy of Dr. Moore's letter, I mean the one I send him, so this you read must go to post. If you can contrive no better way, I shall call for it myself to-morrow; as I am going for Edinburgh by way of Paisley and Glasgow, to-morrow morning.

My most respectful compliments to Lady Wallace, Miss Logan,[2] who I heard at Ayr t'other day is at Dunlop, The Major and all your good family.—I have the honor to be, with the highest respect and most sincere gratitude, Madam, your much oblidged very humble servt., ROBT. BURNS.

(1) This was the famous "Autobiography," of which Mrs. Dunlop preserved a copy, now in Mr. Adam's possession.

(2) The "sentimental sister Susie" of the poet's friend, Major Logan, of Ayr.

On the 7th August Burns arrived in Edinburgh. On the 25th he set out on his northern tour, and on the 16th September he returned to Edinburgh. The following letter from Mrs. Dunlop would be awaiting his arrival:—

Ad. To Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Mossgill,
near Mauchline.

DUNLOP, *9th Sept.* 1787.

Dr. Sir—I read your manuscript [Autobiography] with more pleasure than Richardson or Fielding could have afforded me. I had drawn to myself a character of the author, and was interested to find a confirmation of my own system, or materials to form a new one. I changed my mind at every line, and jumpt about in my opinion, like the Vision of Babouc in the review of Persepolis.[1] You said I would laugh at you, but you know me not. I am more akin to the crying than the laughing philosopher. I was truly interested as well as much amused, and my feelings, tho' strongly marked, were of the tragic comic kind, but never for one moment indifferent enough to become a farce. Your Emilius is still more engaging than Rousseau's, and you lead him on through even a more extraordinary path.

> Your alchymy is sure of wond'rous kind,
> That thus could form the manners and the mind;
> Draw polish'd learning from a smuggling club,
> And black contagion from bright virtue's rub.

And a sore rub it was you got from your incomparable West Indian [Richard Brown]—an irrecoverable one too. You say "Here he hurt me," but seem little aware how much. Indeed he rubbed off the finest polish conferred on the human soul by the hand of the

great Creator, and which once tarnished no art can ever again burnish. He extended your ideas, taught you to quit gold for tinsel, to explode those native sensations of the honest peasant which once imparted to your own breast and conveyed to another bliss, which all the pride of wealth, fame, or knowledge can never equal or compensate. He made you from that moment a less happy being, and a less estimable man, reduced you to a level with those gentry you were born to soar above, by changing your sweetest pleasures and most rational pursuit into a trivial amusement, debasing serious attachment into affected foppery and modish gallantry unworthy of any steady return. Shall a man dare to lament if his mistress imbibe his own sentiments, and feel it as unimportant to meet or part as he does? Here indeed the cottage leaves the palace far behind, and while you were straining every nerve in chase of improvement, you unfortunately run full cry on the back scent, and lost the man in quest of the gentleman. But I need say no more. If virtue is her own reward, by this you know vice is likeways sometimes her own punishment. Don't you hear the confidences of rustic innocence with inexpressible envy and bitter regret? At what price would you not repurchase the first feelings of your heart, that delicate fine ether of the soul which, once evaporated, can never be regained, and which you have been at pains endeavouring to dissipate, tho' I have a strong notion it is by nature so strongly blended with your vital spirits that you will never be able to get quite clear of it. But I am afraid there is another blessing of your early days will not stick so fast—that *idiot piety* you appear to despise because it is the piety of a child. Remember, my dear sir, where we are told that of such is the Kingdom of Heaven. There is a sweet enthusiasm which seems reserved for women and children as the tenderest pledge of heavenly love. I am sure I most sincerely pity the man who has too much sense for it; I will not positively say it can secure us everlasting joys above, but certes it is calculated to soothe sorrow and gild the wings of hope while we are here below. It is twin sister to a warm heart and a keen temper, the inseparable companion of a lively imagination, and therefore I hope still inherent in your breast, whence if it should ever be drove away, your verses will never again rise to that sublimity to which they have hitherto attained. Nothing else could have inspired a man to write "A Winter Dirge" at seventeen, if it is possible to believe any one ever could compose it at that age, which I own I have hardly faith for, spite of every allowance I can make for the misfortunes of a beloved and dying parent

ripening the mind of a dutiful and affectionate son, for that son's being a prodigy himself, etc. etc. etc. If it is a truism (*sic*) do confirm it, and if you wish me to write you any more tell me the names of the Capt. of the West Indiaman and of the man whom the money of the Begums [2] could not corrupt, but by this I daresay you have compared my letters so often as to be tired of the task, and to think of me as our Mrs. (?) said of you, that I have little sense and very great conceit to put a comparison so disadvantageous for myself in your power after I knew it would be made. But I am like the sensitive plant or a cobweb on the wall, which something flies across and hurts every moment, and since you have encouraged me to scribble rhyme or reason just as they come uppermost, I have found a great relief from doing it, and both my health and spirits are gainers, notwithstanding circumstances went against their changing to that hand, for since I saw you I have had a daughter almost drown'd, a grandchild [a little Vans Agnew] dead in France, and have got home my two married *children*, and for all this have been so well as to wonder at myself were not all my capacity for wondering taken up elsewhere wondering at *you*.

I have a strong desire to see the lines you wrote on Miss Alexander.[3] How shall I tempt you to show me them? Will it prevail that I send you a sight of some I wrote one day as I happened to walk by the road-side where some palm-boughs were growing which I had pulled a twig from and meant to send by a friend I am very fond of to a very young and very beautiful sister of hers, from whom I had that moment got a verse-letter? You will justly say "What a poor exchange are your scrawls for my lines!" but consider, you show yours to all the world; I show mine only to you, and keep no copy of what is never meant to be wrote twice, nor would I presume to ask those lines but that you told me they were not to be printed, tho' they had merit. Now, I own I admire the lady's self-denial more than yours, which is not wholly void of ill-nature, whereas hers is probably only cold prudence dictated by some wise relation, and not perfectly congenial with her own feelings, which I daresay would have been gratified by your gaining applause from the world on so favourite a theme as herself. Yet I mean not to detract from the lady's modest merit—I never saw her. Only, as she is handsome, is a woman, and has two nabob brothers, I think it probable she has some vanity, and Voltaire, tho' very persuasive, cannot convince me that the probable *never* happens.

You express yourself uneasie in having lived hitherto without

an aim. You have certainly now a noble one before you to secure easie independence and immortal fame, both which I flatter myself stand clearly within your stretch, if past success, sanguine hope, and dissipated company don't make you indolent, alter your original character, or strengthen that hypochondriac tint which has, you say, already tinged your constitution, and which, where it once enters, requires every exertion both of body and mind to throw it off, especially with one accustomed to an active life in their early years. I would be happy to know you were engaged in some more extensive work than any you have yet attempted, because I think it would be more interesting to yourself and more pleasing to the world, would give a more permanent stability to your fame, and show that your genius was not a transient flash of bright lightning, but the steady radiance of the meridian sun in his most unclouded splendor. After striking out so singular a path as you have already done, I am persuaded there is nothing to which with earnest application you may not be equal. Detached pieces, however remarkable, leave on the mind only a passing impression like "the memory of the stranger that tarrieth but one night," whereas an epic work, as being considered the utmost height of human excellency, is never to be forgotten by the latest ages, but will add luster to Ayrshire, and glorify her Bard to the end of time itself if he succeed. If he fail, he falls where numbers have fallen before him; the attempt brings no disgrace, but yields great pleasure and amusement, and may even, should it not fill all the writer's ideas, be productive of very considerable profit to the author, to the bookseller, and to the readers. I am sure I have reason to say so, nor can I ever repay the debt I owe you since your writings soothed my mind and fixed my attention when nothing else could. If ever I feel happy again, I shall certainly thank you, for I do think your "Ruin" and "Despondency" first opened the way for returning peace to my mind, while my subsequent reading what dropt from your pen added to the pleasure of seeing you, and the permission of glancing over the Doctor's letter has awakened the strongest ambition to be honour'd with your friendship. I flatter myself nobody ever held a higher place in his, and I can trace a great similitude in character as well as face, allowing for thirty years' start in the world before you. The doctor and I are within six months of each other, and were friends half a dozen years before you saw the light—I do not mean of the Muses, but of Apollo himself. It was even some years before that period he brought me his bride that I might join their hands before the priest. When they lost their children 'twas me shared

and dryed their mutual tears. I esteem her above all the women I ever knew, and like her almost as much as I do her husband. While they were in Scotland we lived in the happiest intercourse. It sweetens the very hope of heaven to think we shall there renew it. Don't you recognize her and I in one of his letters from Geneva [1] among the rocks of the Meillerie? And you will meet me again where he mentions a present one lady had sent another of a picture of the Virgin Mary. You bid me read his letter by myself lest you should be laugh'd at. You men never think of anything but yourselves. Do you think I should have been wholly insensible to the laugh against myself for reading it at all? I assure you I run no risque of showing it.

What an unmerciful letter I have wrote! I have a good mind to work a purse or a case to put it in as an atonement for the trespass on your time, and to show you the ladies are not so curst with want of work as you think them. On the contrary, you may remember some lines I once sent you wrote on yourself. The author of these was actually spinning a pair of stockings during their composition, as I can bear witness. Now, I am going to ask a favour. Never come here again if you resolve to come in when the table is cover'd and be tired of us all by dinner is done, for I would as soon ask you to come and visit me in my seat at church, or to make one of these court calls now in fashion, that just convince one people have no pleasure in seeing them.—Farewell.—Your obliged and obedient humble servt.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Voltaire's *Le Monde comme il va: Vision de Babouc*.

(2) A misreading of the phrase in the Autobiography: "One, whose heart I am sure not even the 'Munny Begum's' scenes have tainted"; said by Gilbert to have been the eldest son of Dr. Malcolm, of Ayr, a boy friend of the poet's who served as an officer in India.

(3) Wilhelmina Alexander, heroine of the song "The Lass o' Ballochmyle." She ignored Burns's request for permission to include the song in the Edinburgh edition, and he bitterly resented the slight.

(4) Moore's *View of Society and Manners in France*, etc.

Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, to the care of William Kerr, Esq., General Surveyor of the Post-Office, Edinburgh.

DUNLOP, *15th Nov.* 1787.

Dr. Sir—Hearing you are at Edr.[1] I send (to the care of

a worthy young man, Mr. Kerr, one of the principal men about the Post-Office, and son to a great friend of mine, whose character was not less original than your own) a packet I got from Dr. Moore yesterday for you. I take this method for two reasons: that I may know if it come to hand, and that it may be post free being bulky; otherways I should not have wrote you at present. However, since the pen is in my hand, I cannot omit telling you our friend the Dr. has been the means of getting one of my sons [James] appointed to a Company in one of the new Regts. for India. I wish I had your genius that I might thank him as I ought. By the by, I am told you think no friend you have would take two hours' trouble to make your fortune. Is this sentiment the offspring of modest diffidence, small penetration, or ingratitude? For sure I am it is fraught with terrible injustice. Adieu.—Your most obediently, FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Burns visited Harvieston and the two Ochtertyres in October, and returned to Edinburgh on the 20th, taking up his abode at 2 (now 30) St. James's Square, with his friend Cruikshank, a High School master (*d.* 1795).

Dr. MOORE to ROBERT BURNS.

CLIFFORD ST., *8th Nov.* 1787.

Dear Sir—At the time your very interesting letter came to my hands I was involved in a business that gave me a great deal of trouble. This, with the rumour of war which then prevailed, and the efforts I was obliged to make to get my son the Lieut. in the Navy [see *postea*, p. 300], placed in a proper situation, prevented my answering you immediately. I now assure you that the account you give of yourself and the admirable manner in which

> You run it through even from your boyish days
> To the very moment that you kindly tell it,

afforded me much pleasure.

> Your moving accident in the harvest field
> With her whose voice thrill'd *like th' Æolian Harp*,
> Your hairbreadth 'scapes in *th' imminent deadly breach*,
> The process raised by holy cannibals
> Who such devour as follow Nature's law,
> Your wild and headstrong rage for matrimony
> Your redemption thence, whereof by parcels
> I had something heard, but not distinctively—

all were highly interesting to me, and augment the advantageous opinion I had formed of you on seeing your first publication.

In your letter you hint at your scarcity of English. I am far

from thinking that this is the case. On the contrary I am convinced you already possess that language in an uncommon degree, and with a little attention you will become entirely master of it. In several of your poems there is a striking richness and variety of expression—for which reason I hope you will use it in most of your future productions. If there actually existed a language called the Scotch language, which had a grammar, and which was used by the best writers of Scotland, I should perhaps prefer it to the English. But unfortunately there is no such thing. The Scotch is as provincial a dialect of the English as the Somersetshire or Yorkshire. And therefore no serious work can be written in it to advantage, altho' it must be owned in works of humour and *naïveté* it sometimes gives additional force and beauty. Some of your humorous poems have gained by it, and it gives a fresh charm to the beautiful simplicity of some of your songs.

I hope you will plan out some work of importance and suitable to your genius, which you will polish at leisure and in the returns of fancy, and do not waste your fire on incidental subjects or the effusions of gratitude on receiving small marks of attention from the great or small vulgar.

I heard you was at one great castle[1] in the W. Highlands. Whatever the place might, I can hardly suspect the inhabitants would inspire you with much to admire. Their minds are prosaic and grovelling; the Muses have no charm in the eyes of either; tho' one is a person of much mildness of character and integrity.

I will be much obliged to you when you have leisure to fulfil your promise of sending me *the ideas you picked up in your pilgrimage thro' the Highlands and your early rhimes.*

I think you should employ your leisure in collecting and polishing a sufficient number to form another volume, but the principal part should be new, and for this I would have you to reflect very attentively to choose right subjects; for much depends on this. You have greatly distinguished yourself from common rhymers by drawing your imagery directly from Nature, and avoiding hackneyed phrases and borrowed allusions. This you will always have pride and good sense to continue. With the reputation you have justly acquired I make no doubt of your being able to get a considerable sum for a second volume, whether you publish by subscription, or sell the copy at once to a bookseller. I shall be most ready to afford you my best assistance and advice on that or any other occasion in which I may have it in my power to be of use to you. But you must

consider now that you have a reputation to lose, and therefore you will certainly not be rash in offering any new work to the public till it has lain a considerable time by you, and been often subjected to consideration. If you think of any particular subject, I wish you would let me know. I'll freely give you my opinion, which you will afterwards follow or not as you please; in neither case will you in the smallest degree disoblige me.

Perhaps you may come to London with your new work. If you do, I will be happy to see you, and all my family are in the same way of thinking. Adieu, my dear Burns.—Believe me, with much regard, your friend and servt. J. MOORE.

Direct under cover to Major J. Moore, M.P.,
Clifford St., Burlington Gardens, London.

At Miss Williams's [2] desire I send you a copy of some lines I wrote to her lately when she was at Southampton. She said she wished to send you her picture drawn by me. The truth, however, is they are all exaggeration, for she is remarkably pretty; but on her being a little out of humour at my laughing at her nose, and chin, and stooping, which she expressed in a letter, I wrote, in answer, the enclosed.

I confess I have said—but pray do not pout—
That your chin is too fond of yr aquiline snout,
Like the world dispos'd from inferiours to fly,
It always looks up to the features on high.
That I said of your back, and I still must say so,
It resembles the back of an Indian canoe:
What was strait as an arrow, you've bent like a bow.
I must own too I hinted your waddling walk
Was much like a parrot's—and sometimes yr talk.
Yet these observations as plainly you'll view,
Tho' they glance at your person, don't touch upon *you*;
For *you* never can think—you're too much refined—
That your body is *you*—you's entirely your mind.
And when yr sweet genius so gracefully flows,
In melodious verse or poetical prose,
Who thinks of your chin or the turn of yr toes?
For you, my dear Helen, have proved by your works
That women have souls, in the teeth of the Turks.
Your person and face in the hands of those
Who think upon nought but the care of their bodies
It is true would be ranked for beauty and air
In a pretty high class of the graceful and fair,
And would doubtless attract from the thoughtless and gay
A more pointed regard to yr fabrick of clay,
But all those you will treat with scorn eternal
Who sigh for the shell and taste not the kernel.

(1) This may be an allusion to the poet's mysterious High-

land tour of June 1787, but more probably the castle referred to is Gordon Castle—Dr. Moore may not have been strong in Scotch geography—and the "inhabitants" the Duke and Duchess of Gordon.

(2) Helen Maria Williams, poetess and novelist; born in London 1762, settled in Paris in 1790, and imprisoned as a partisan of the Gironde; in her later political writings condemned the Revolution. Her works include *Julia*, a novel; a translation of *Paul and Virginia;* several books on France; and poems, including *Edwin and Elfrida* and *The Slave Trade.*

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Madam—I will bear the reproaches of my conscience respecting this letter no longer. I was indebted to you some time ago for a kind, long letter (your letters the longer the better), and again the other day I heard from you, enclosing a very friendly letter from Dr. Moore. I thought with myself, in the height of my gratitude and pride, of my remark that I would sit down some hour of inspiration and write you a letter at least worth twa groats; consequently you would have been a great gainer, as you are so benevolent as to bestow your epistolary correspondence on me (I am sure) without the least idea of being paid *in kind.*

When you talk of correspondence and friendship to me, Madam, you do me too much honor; but, as I shall soon be at my wonted leisure and rural occupation, if any remark on what I have read or seen, or any new rhyme I may twist, that is worth while—if such a letter, Madam, can give a person of your rank, information, and abilities any entertainment, you shall have it with all my heart and soul.

It requires no common exercise of good sense and philosophy in persons of elevated rank to keep a friendship properly alive with one much their inferior. Externals, things totally extraneous of the man, steal upon the hearts and judgments of almost, if not altogether, all mankind; nor do I know more than one instance of a man who fully and truly regards "all the world as a stage, and all the men and women merely players," and who (the dancing-school bow excepted) only values these players—the *dramatis personæ*, who build cities, and who rear hedges; who govern provinces, or superintend flocks—merely as they *act their parts.* For the honor of Ayrshire, this man is Professor Dugald Stewart of Catrine. To him I might perhaps add another instance, a

popish bishop, Geddes;[1] but I have outraged that gloomy, fiery Presbyterianism enough already, though I don't spit in her lugubrious face by telling her that the first (*i.e.* the best) Cleric character I ever saw was a Roman Catholic.

I ever could ill endure those surly cubs of "chaos and old night"—those ghostly beasts of prey who foul the hallowed ground of Religion with their nocturnal prowlings; but if the prosecution which I hear the Erebean fanatics are projecting against my learned and truly worthy friend, Dr. M'Gill,[2] goes on, I shall keep no measure with the savages, but fly at them with the *faucons* of Ridicule, or run them down with the bloodhounds of Satire, as lawful game, wherever I start them.

I expect to leave Edinr. in eight or ten days, and shall certainly do myself the honor of calling at Dunlop House as I return to Ayrshire.—I have the honor to be, Madam, your obliged humble servant, ROBT. BURNS.

EDINR., *4th Nov.*[3] 1787.

(1) A native of Banffshire; from 1779 to 1797 coadjutor to the vicar-apostolic of the lowland district of Scotland. An Edinburgh friend of Burns's, he procured subscriptions for the second edition from the Scots College at Valladolid and other Roman Catholic seminaries.

(2) Rev. Dr. M'Gill, of Ayr, the Dr. Mac of "The Kirk's Alarm"; prosecuted for heresy (1789-90) on account of his *Practical Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ.*

(3) Obviously misdated, as it refers to Mrs. Dunlop's letters of 4th September and 15th November and Dr. Moore's of 8th November. It must have been written on a very early day after the 15th November, as Mrs. Dunlop, in hers of 25th December, refers to it as dating six weeks back.

Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, at Mr. Cruickshank's,
St. James's Square.

DUNLOP, *25th Decr.* 1787.

Dear Sir—You say 'tis an exertion of philosophy to keep alive an intercourse with our inferiours. I dare say you must frequently have found it so; for my part I have never had an opportunity of putting it to the trial, as I never remember to have wrote three letters following to any one person, where business did not oblige me to it, in the whole course of my life; excepting where the consciousness of a decided superiourity against me was the very

motive which guided my pen, and made me assiduously cultivate a correspondence where I felt myself a gainer. The notice of those who possess solid judgment, shining talents, or superlative goodness of heart, has always been the first ambition and the truest pleasure of my life, although, the late Lord Eglinton[1] excepted, I never met these in an eminent degree in the very first rank of my acquaintance. Neither is that train of information which makes a man's ideas at once pleasing and instructive, peculiar to high life. On the contrary I have now seen letters from different Ayrshire peasants, which by being addrest to me, flattered my self-love more than it could have been by the receipt of as many from any peer I have now the honour of knowing. The most estimable, and I may add the most useful of my friends, have set out in life very hardly; but yet I have had the happiness to see the world confess, and fortune reward their merit. Two particularly, who at the beginning of our acquaintance could not command five pounds between them, I have seen masters of £12,000 or £15,000 apiece, without any assistance but their own talent, and it gives me inconceivable pleasure to reflect that I was able twenty years ago to discern those talents through the mist in which they were then involved. One of these gentlemen was then a poet. I sent him your book t'other day, and wrot on a blank leaf the following lines, from which you may trace the date of our acquaintance:—

> To you, who in your idle boyish days
> Sported with Echo round Parnassus base,
> Bound classic evergreens around her brows,
> Or plaited myrtles where now laurel grows;
> From Europe's coasts to India's shores I send
> Those songs that charm your country and your friend;
> From Coila's plains, your lov'd, your natal scene,
> With Burns I greet my Davie and his Jane.
> . . . . . .

You see I don't keep my rhymes till they be worth while; so don't be a miser of yours. I receive with grateful joy your promise of writing, since you give it with your heart. I was afraid you might have been of the opinion of some people that private letters exhaust an author's genius. Now, when yours flows so high as to wash the sands of Pactolus, by reaching the public, don't waste it on me; but should ever your spirits flag too much for the crowd, yet feel relaxation in breathing the effusions of the moment where every scrap of yours will be valued, indulge me with those gleanings which shall be the solace of my solitary hours, my secret heart's exulting boast; but no fund of vanity for

you, no increase of fame, for no eye will see them but my own. If you chuse to sacrifice now and then your time to me on these terms, I will be truly grateful, and you will enjoy your dearest mead "a friend's esteem and praise," though perhaps you could not on the face of the earth pick up a more useless friend in every respect than I must always be, now that I have lost those dear and respectable connections that formerly used to adopt, dignify, and patronise every partiality of mine. I wish you had known my father, that you might have honoured Ayrshire still more, and not thought Professor Stewart the only Phœnix of the age. I am sure he at least deserved to rival him in the instance of just discernment you mention, for which I will ever love and revere his memory. Your character of the Bishop delights me. I am proud of my son Andrew for being so fond of him since I read your last, for I convince myself yours is honest unbiased approbation ; and that makes me keen to gain it for myself.

I hope the clergy will not meddle with Mr. M'Gill, that you may not meddle with them. This is not the age of priestcraft that calls for opposition. Those that deserve it are too mean game for genius to hurt, and the satire too local for sale ; it would be a subject would bring you less profit, and me less pleasure, than many a one Nature I am sure will point to you, or you are not the man I take you for, and I would be very sorry to think I was mistaken where I believe so much esteem justly due.

I am afraid Edr. has monopolised your whole time, or you calculate like Daniel by weeks of years when you are to leave it ; 'tis already six weeks of our vulgar arithmetic since you said you would be west in ten days, and no news of you yet. You say you like rhyme and long letters. This ought, I'm sure, to please, if you know yourself and tell truth when you say so. The season reminds me of expressing those good wishes which I can honestly say are not confined to the holidays, but attend you all the year round. May the fire of fancy warm every winter of your life as it has done the past, and fate realise as many of imagination's dreams as are necessary to make you happy, and allow me to add an interested wish for myself, that you may always find pleasure in letting me know what you are doing and how the world goes with you. But never mention rank or fortune. Don't think of these unless it is to remember your own advantages in both. In family, as in everything else, who would not rather be the Alpha as the Omega? In fortune are not those most happy to whom her smile is least necessary and her frown least dreadful? At any rate I assure you I neither enjoy nor possess her superfluities, and

were you enabled to draw a comparison fairly with regard to the staging of that scene, you would not find your own lot in life, when laid in the scale with many the world set much weight on, kick the beam as you perhaps imagine it does. At all events to us who, like Pharamond's friend Eginhart,[2] are to go through the world without expectations from one another, those accidents signify nothing, and therefore ought not to deprive either party of what portion of goodwill the other thinks they merit, nor seclude that freedom of the pen which enlivens our pleasures and above all soothes our misfortunes.

> When to the wrongs of fate half reconciled
> Misfortune's lightened *eye can* wander wild,
> And disappointment in *a letter's* bounds
> Find balm to soothe her bitter rankling wounds.

You see where I am. The poet's beautiful expression makes me sicken of my own tepid stuff; so I shall bid you adieu, lest it have the same effect upon you, if you have had patience to get this length, in which case accept the thanks of your humble servt. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Alexander, tenth Earl, shot dead by Mungo Campbell, exciseman, in 1769.

(2) Probably La Calprenède's novel, *Faramond* (1661).

After at least one postponement Burns had arranged to leave Edinburgh at the beginning of December, when an accident, caused by a drunken coachman, laid him up for several weeks. The Clarinda episode intervened, and it was only on the 23rd of February that he reached Mossgiel. The first of the two following letters was written in a fit of depression due to physical pain, a return of his old nervous ailment, and the uncertainty of his prospects, for in January he was still pressing Creech for a settlement of accounts. The tone of the second was doubtless influenced by the high pitch of emotional exaltation to which the poet had been wrought up by his intercourse with Mrs. Maclehose.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

EDINBURGH, 21*st January* 1788.

After six weeks' confinement, I am beginning to walk across the room. They have been six horrible weeks; anguish and low spirits made me unfit to read, write, or think.

I have a hundred times wished that one could resign life as an officer resigns a commission: for I would not *take in* any poor

ignorant wretch by *selling out.* Lately I was a sixpenny private, and, God knows, a miserable soldier enough; now I march to the campaign, a starving cadet: a little more conspicuously wretched.

I am ashamed of all this; for though I do want bravery for the warfare of life, I could wish, like some other soldiers, to have as much fortitude or cunning as to dissemble or conceal my cowardice.

As soon as I can bear the journey, which will be, I suppose, about the middle of next week, I leave Edinburgh, and soon after I shall pay my grateful duty at Dunlop House. R. B.

Ad. Mr. Robt. Burns.

[*January*, 1788.]

I had yours only this day. I am truly vext to see your train of ideas at present. I would read my old grandmother's moulded household-book forty times over, and get every recipe by heart, could it furnish one salve for an wounded spirit as effectual as I met myself in your first publication; but I fear you have drove away the only friend could supply that cordial; that childish *idiot*, the companion of your *early days*, nor will you ever be as happy again unless you are able to recall that discarded friend, unknown in the polite circle, and cherish her like a beloved wife, never to be divorced from your bosom. But this, I fear, is impossible; 'tis here we have the advantage of you. A weak mind, if it takes a wrong bias, it meets another more strong than itself, whose arguments can bend it back to its original rectitude, and make it ashamed of its error. A masculine spirit, once warped by passion or folly, sticks to the wrong with a noble obstinacy, seldom exercised for the right, of which he has often learned to be ashamed. I fear I must not mention piety to you, now that you are quarrelled and abuse her with bad names. I am afraid this salt of the soul, when it has lost its savour, cannot again be salted, and I am sure, if it is cast out and trodden under foot, nothing in this world can supply its place. Besides her other qualities the poor idiot is the very best sick-nurse on earth. How she would have cheared your last six horrid weeks, had you not so inhumanly banished her with reproaches from your presence. I really pity you shut up alone with cruelty and remorse, putting arms in the hand of the dark assassin, not only to murder poor poverty, but wickedly to stifle her weak cry. I don't know how to comfort you under the pressure of such terrible guilt but by recommending you to the Jesuits, not for extreme unction, as I trust yours is no death-bed repentance. Let me send you my

only purse, and the only guinea it ever contained, that you may go to your favourite bishop and buy absolution, drink the dredgey[1] of the miserable victim, or say mass *against* her resurrection. I hope this will set me too a step on my way to heaven, should I once in my life have contributed to make two souls happy, but I hope after all you will take care what coachman brings you home. Above all don't let the devil drive, as it is alledged you sometimes do. We are told you are in prison[2] for writing not only Jacobite but blackguard verses against the King. Perhaps it had been as well so. Pain is a hard jailer, and a prison might have saved you a crutch. But forgive me, dear Burns, and don't think I mean to insult by laughing at your low spirits. Nothing is farther from my thoughts. I would only divert a melancholy which, by breathing itself in a pun, persuades me it may be trifled with and palliated without being so irritated as to become incurable. Yet the whims that strike the sick are so unaccountable that I confess I stand in awe of yours. Don't be angry at my sending you this trifle. Remember, you began it yourself by sending me your own head. It is a maxim in higher life that a present should always be of something quite useless. I did not like to seem ungrateful, and I could think of nothing apparently more useless to you than a purse. I therefore made one, and having heard somebody remark it was unlucky to get an empty one, wrap it up with the single note it happened at the moment to contain. Should this offend you, cast it from you by the first opportunity, and cast with it every propensity to misunderstand the goodwill of your friends for the future.

When you write elegy I would wish it on my chief or your friend—in short on some great, some rare subject such as occurs more seldom than the great Jubilee. 'Tis hardly credible two[3] in one year should employ without degrading the first pen of a country. Both were good men, men of worth, dear to their friends, nor unnoted by their country; yet 'tis piteous, 'tis wondrous piteous if both were worthy your song, and both are gone almost together.

I don't admire the word "bleaky."[4] To me diminutives have only beauty when they are used as endearments; in all other cases they betray a poverty of language, which is obliged to borrow a syllable. Now, this is convicting innocence itself when such an accusation is established against you, who have words at will—more expressive ones too than anybody else. I hope you will come this way that you may defend this word properly in person, if you have aught to say for it. If not, give it up with a

good grace. Yet, spite of the cold weather, I would not give a sixpence to see you if you only come to fetch fire as you did before. But I beg, if anything prevent you, that you will let me hear how you are, as I shall really be interested in your health and happiness, and impatient to learn the return of both. May all your woes henceforth be feigned ones, and vanish as fast as they can black your paper, for that itself is sometimes a cure, and I am sure I should think the more of myself as long as I lived if you could find it so in writing me. I shall send this to my friend Mr. Kerr, since he has found you out, which is more than I should have been able to do without his help. Adieu. I will be sorry if you are limped off before this reach you.

> Admit those dear companions of your youth—
> Warm unwarpt Piety and simple Truth;
> Those humble handmaids plac'd around your bed
> Bar out Remorse, and bind the aching head.
> . . . . . .

(1) Dredgey, from *dirge*, liquor drunk (*more Scotico*) at funerals.

(2) Burns tradition has no trace of this extraordinary rumour.

(3) The elegies on Sir David Hunter Blair and Lord President Dundas were products of this year.

(4) The word occurs in the first line of the poem "On the Death of Lord President Dundas."

To Mrs. Dunlop.

The much-respected Patroness of my early Muse certainly deserved a better return from me than to let her excellent, her kind letter remain so long unanswered. Your elegant epistle, Madam, and your very handsome present, as handsomely delivered, struck me so much, that I immediately made a private vow to give you a few verses on the subject; or at least, write you such a Post-sheet as would be a pennyworth at sixpence. I have failed in both. Some important business respecting my future days, and the miserable dunning and plaguing of Creech, has busied me till I am good for nothing. Your criticisms and observations on the President's Elegy are just. I am sick of writing where my bosom is not strongly interested. Tell me what you think of the following? There the *bosom* was perhaps a little *interested.*

Clarinda, Mistress of my soul,[1]
The measur'd time is run!
The wretch beneath the dreary Pole
So marks his latest sun.

To what dark cave of frozen night
Shall poor Sylvander hie?
Depriv'd of thee, his life and light,
The sun of all his joy!

We part—but by these precious drops
That fill thy lovely eyes!
No other light shall guide my steps
Till thy bright beams arise.

She, the fair Sun of all her Sex,
Has blest my glorious day:
And shall a glimmering Planet fix
My worship to its ray?

Mr. Schetky, the celebrated Musician, has done these lines the honor of setting them to music. The following is a *jeu d'esprit* of t'other day, on a despairing Lover carrying me to see his Dulcinea.

Anna, thy charms my bosom fire,[2]
And press my soul with care;
But ah, how bootless to admire,
When fated to despair!

Yet, in thy presence, lovely Fair,
To hope may be forgiven;
For sure 'twere impious to despair,
So much in sight of Heaven!

(1) These verses were written to Mrs. Maclehose just before Burns left Edinburgh. They were published by both Johnson and Thomson.

(2) The despairing lover was Alexander Cunningham. The lady married another man, and Burns sent the verses to the London *Star*, in which they were published on 18th April 1789. Schetky was a German (born at Darmstadt, 1740), settled as a teacher of music in Edinburgh.

To Mrs. Dunlop.

Edinburgh, 12*th February* 1788.
[Mutilated half-sheet.]

I do not know whether I have not, sometime or other, sent you my Epigram on Elphinstone's translation of, and commentaries on Martial, the famous Latin Poet:—

To Mr. E.

O thou, whom Poesy abhors ;
Whom Prose has turned out of doors !
Heardst thou yon groan ? proceed no further !
'Twas laurell'd Martial calling Murther !

I leave Edinburgh on Saturday morning. If my horse meet me at Glasgow, I will probably do myself the honor of calling at Dunlop-house.

Some things, my revered Patroness, in your late letters hurt me : not that *you say them*, but that you *mistake me*. Religion, my honored Madam, has not only been all my life my chief dependance, but my dearest enjoyment. I have indeed been the luckless victim of wayward Follies ; but, alas ! I have ever been "more fool than knave." A Mathematician without Religion is a probable character ; an irreligious Poet, is a Monster.

I have been lately at Lady Wallace's, and was delighted to find Miss Dunlop [probably Susan] a daughter of the Mother ; I shall call there again ere I leave town.—I have the honor to be, Madam, your oblidged, humble servt. Robt. Burns.

This letter is docketed in the MS. "good—fit for publication," but only the second paragraph, with the words "my revered Patroness" omitted, was published by Currie and subsequent biographers and editors. James Elphinston (1721-1809), a native of Edinburgh, kept a boarding-school at Kensington, and was a friend of Samuel Johnson. His *The Epigrams of M. Val. Martial, in twelve books, with a Comment, by James Elphinston*, was a quarto published in London in 1782. Burns wrote this quatrain—so he told Mrs. Maclehose in a letter of 14th January of this year—in a copy of the book which he glanced at in a merchant's (Creech's) shop in Edinburgh. This volume is now the property of Mr. Robert Munro, Ibrox, Glasgow. For Lady Wallace's house, see *postea*, p. 103.

Burns left Edinburgh on the 18th of February for Glasgow, where he stayed overnight, and met his friend Richard Brown. On the following day he proceeded to Paisley, and thence to Dunlop House, where he spent two days. A day or two after, probably on the 25th, he went to Ellisland to spy out the land, and returned to Mossgiel on the 2nd or 3rd of March.

Mr. Robert Burns.

Dunlop, 30*th Febry.* 1788.

Trusting to your aversion for the foppish follies fashion fetched from France, I flattered myself we should have had the pleasure of seeing you at breakfast, and that you would also have despised a French leave. I had a vision ready for your morning entertainment, but when William told you had been gone two hours, it wholly escaped me in the surprise and disappointment, except four lines, which I shall send you as a specimen that you may not break your heart for the loss of the rest of it. Methought I saw

> From smuggling cells the friend of honour rise
> Borne on her shield in triumph through th' Excise,
> High raised above on fame and glory's wings
> And in low fellowship of gold with kings.
> . . . . . .

I cannot send for your books without returning thanks for the loan. I was once going to have sent you a little novel of the late Duke of Orleans [the Regent], not for its merit, for I have not language to read it myself, but that you might have amused yourself investigating the ladders by which great men mount into the public favour, which would often, I daresay, be found much too short for lesser men even to reach their own approbation. The name of it is *Accajie and Zerphile.* Let me know if you have never seen it, or the *Ikon Basilike* of King Charles. I can lend you both, but would rather give as send them. Besides, when you find a convenient time to get this length, you will see Coila,[1] who is much grown in grace and stature since she appeared last to you here, and has been the close occupation of the lady ever since. Now, since I have mentioned French, I will send you an attempt of mine in that tongue sent one day to one of my boys who wanted a pair of globes from me along with them :—

> Une mere pour plaire a ses enfants
> Rumage la terre pour la viande ;
> Bon bon j'ecrach entre les dents
> De les petit hereux gourmands.
> Un spectacles pour le folatre,
> Pour les brave un mock combatre,
> Pour la mienne je suis la commandeuse
> D'un entretien plus doux ;
> Pouvez-vous vous defendre
> De l'orquil quand je rendre
> Dans vos main cette grand transfere
> De tout les cieux et toute la terre.

You will not think I stand in great fear of your critizism when I

venture to show you such trifles, but I am just doing as I would be done by. Another communication too I would beg, which is to know if this country is to be deprived of her native Bard, or where you expect will be your destination. I hear there is a book come out against you, but I have not seen it. Perhaps you may say with Solomon (*sic*), "Oh that mine adversary had wrote a book!" I wrot a very pretty farewell in the fear you were about to leave us, but I will not let you see it in revenge for a sarcasm you threw at me last day. Indeed I don't like sharp wit, and would as soon try the edge of my penknife on the throat of my friend as my metal against anybody that wished me well. This is not your way of thinking, however, or I had certainly been safe, spite of the refined skill you say I possess in Indian tortures, for you must be sensible I did not mean to exercise that art against you, so needed not have avenged yourself five or six hours after so bitterly as you did. Adieu.—Believe me still, with very great esteem, your obliged, humble servt.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Mrs. Dunlop's daughter Rachel was painting a sketch of Coila.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

MOSSGIEL, *7th March* 1788.[1]

Madam—The last paragraph in yours of the 30th February affected me most, so I shall begin my answer where you ended your letter. That I am often a sinner with the little wit I have, I do confess; but I have taxed my recollection to no purpose to find out when it was employed against you. I hate an ungenerous sarcasm a great deal worse than I do the devil; at least as Milton describes him; and though I may be rascally enough to be sometimes guilty of it myself, I cannot endure it in others. You, my honored friend, who cannot appear in any light but you are sure of being respectable—you can afford to pass by an occasion to display your wit, because you may depend for fame on your sense; or if you chuse to be silent, you know you can rely on the gratitude of many and the esteem of all; but God help us who are wits or witlings by profession, if we stand not for fame there, we sink unsupported!

I am highly flattered by the news you tell me of Coila. I may say to the fair painter who does me so much honor, as Dr. Beattie says to Ross the poet of his muse Scota, from which, by the bye, I took the idea of Coila ('tis a poem of Beattie's in the Scots dialect,[2] which perhaps you have never seen):

Ye shak your head, but, o' my fegs,	shake, by my faith
Ye've set auld Scota on her legs:	
Lang had she lien wi' buffs and flegs,	endured, blows, kicks
Bombaz'd and dizzie,	stupefied
Her fiddle wanted strings and pegs,	
Waes me, poor hizzie!	

(1) Burns wrote other three letters on this date — one to Mrs. Maclehose, one to Robert Muir, and the third to Richard Brown.

(2) "To Mr. Alexander Ross, at Lochlee, author of 'The Fortunate Shepherdess and other Poems in the Broad Scotch Dialect.'"

On the 14th, the date of Mrs. Dunlop's next letter, Burns was again in Edinburgh. On the 13th, as he wrote to Miss Chalmers, he "compleated a bargain with Mr. Miller of Dalswinton for the farm of Ellisland."

Ad. Mr. Robert Burns,
Mr. Crouch's,[1] Master of the Gramer School, Edinburgh.

14th March 1788.

Dr. Sir—The Saturday after you left this I sent for and got the books. I have been so busy sewing for my little (expected) grandchild that I have hardly been able to steal a moment to spend with the Fairies. However delightful Spenser's imagination, he is often so very outray and extravagant it becomes disgusting, and often in the finest descriptions some ridiculous circumstance spoils the whole. As, for instance, how do you like the *well* and the *tree* in the battle of St. George and the Dragon? One might have overlooked the one, but it is impossible to keep your temper with both. At least I'm sure I wished poor George had been let sleep both nights quietly abed like other people, since he could be no better disposed of. But I have given you my thoughts on this subject apart, instead of the Vision you ask, which, like your own, "fled like a passing thought," but not "in light away"; on the contrary into impenetrable darkness, from whence it can no more be retrieved. You embarrass me by your kind present of Gray to Keith.[2] It has always been a rule of mine, transmitted me by my father, not to allow any of my girls to accept any present while under my direction. Yet Nature in the formation of a poet seems to understand an exception to general rules, and if you insist on it, I think in this particular

instance I must follow her example, but it would be more agreeable to me would you consent to her only keeping the leaf she likes best, and returning the rest, which you cannot value the less for having been a while in the possession of a young lady to whom your favourable introduction has so much recommended the author that I daresay in a few days she will be able to repeat the whole work, and I am sure will never forget to whom she was indebted for it. Coila will be finished in two days longer, and I flatter myself you will have pleasure in beholding her charms, but Rachel says it is impossible she should please you, even should she be able to succeed with others, for she must look so much worse than when you saw her last by the ingle low [chimney flame] that you will be quite shocked at the change. Nor has she a hope that either her colours or fancy can reach the delicate rouge of poetic painting by the masterly hand that arrayed her for visiting at the auld clay biggin. However, spite of this despair, she has done her very best not to disgrace her subject, and I beg you may come and pass judgment as you come out. Indeed, 'twas to entreat this favour I trouble you with a letter, as I am all impatience to hear the sequel of your business before either you or I leave the country. I believed before I read your last that your good sense had conquered my prejudices, and, as Jenny says in *The Gentle Shepherd*,[3] forced me to quit the field, but although I had wished a piece bit off the tongue that I feared had left a thorn in my neighbour's heart, the moment I seized the idea you threw out of remaining uncertainty I felt an animating joy at it that proved how much I still unwittingly retained my former opinion. Indeed, if you will believe me, it was five minutes before I ever once recollected that the farm was not in Ayrshire. This, indeed, when it occurred, was a cruel danger, a sad postscript to the flattering line which so pleasingly reminds me of a promise I never could have the audacity to make of continuing to write you. Take my honest word; I consider your correspondence as an acquisition for which mine can make no return, as a commerce in which I alone am the gainer; the sight of your hand gives me inexpressible pleasure, and will even do so should it be armed with the Gunter's scale.[4] For all I said there are minds capable of sanctifying any profession. Nay, who ever read *Tom Jones* but felt that there are even reasons that vindicate a man's embracing that of a highwayman, and where he seems to ennoble it. Yet how should I be enchanted with this charming farm were it but in our own country! But in all events I fear we lose you.

Farewell the friend endowed with heavenly song,
Whose gentle manners grace the rural throng,
The patriot Bard whose independent ease
And native dignity must always please ;
Bold chalk'd by Nature when she sketch'd her plan,
Strong mark'd to shine distinguish'd in the van.
. . . . . .

I think it was Charles the Fifth who, about to hang a bishop, previously knelt for his blessing, then wrot the Pope that he revered the monk and only executed the man.

Should you prolong your stay in town, or not come this way, I beg a single line whenever the lot is cast in your business. Besides, I will be a little concerned to know if my wanderer reach you safe, for, as you will remark, I am no Jacobite ; I would not like to give room to the narrow-minded to believe I was one. I likeways wish to ask you a question about your sister. Your hurry, I believe, made you forget about John Woodburn,[5] and I am afraid my son may be sailed before I can get his letters. I should be sorry to miss a possible chance of serving so worthy a man as you speak him to be, or not to make myself happy in telling and his brother in hearing his worth so well vouched for. Adieu. Yet you see I am resolved not to bid you farewell ; indeed I should lose too much by it. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) It has not been known hitherto where Burns stayed during this short visit to Edinburgh. Nothing is known of Crouch.

(2) Mrs. Dunlop's youngest daughter.

(3) Allan Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd.*

(4) A mensuration chain, 66 feet long, with 100 links.

(5) Mrs. Dunlop's youngest and favourite son, Anthony, was about to sail for the East, and it had apparently been arranged that he should take out letters to Captain Woodburn (see *ante*, p. 6) from a brother whom Burns knew and of whom he thought highly.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House, Stewarton.

AYR, *26th March* 1788.

"Speak, sister, is the deed done?"
"Long ago, long ago, long ago ;
Above twelve glasses since have run."

I have at last, my honored Friend, entered in the list of Country farmers. I returned from Edinburgh on Saturday last, with my

tack [lease] in my pocket; and since that time, I assure you, cares and business have occupied my every moment. I have talked fondly of magnanimous resolution and persevering firmness, but every Declaimer talks of them: I wish to prove my claim to them by exertion. I have given up all literary correspondence, all conversation, all reading (prose-reading) that is of the evapourating, dissipating kind. My favorite quotation now, for I always have one, is from Young—

On Reason build Resolve;
That column of true majesty in Man.

I know you will be pleased with this; but were you as weak as most of the family of the Muses, you would be more pleased with what I am going to tell you. I was one day, last time I was in Edinburgh, with Mr. M'Kenzie, the glorious Man of Feeling; and among other things, I read him such of your pieces as I thought proper, such of them as were quite general (they were the two I got from you when I last had the honor of being your guest) and he passed the highest encomiums on them. He warmly begged leave to read them to Mrs. M'Kenzie, whose judgement he very deservedly highly values, and she admired them so much that she anxiously wished a copy; but this I positively declined. If I had the pieces about me, I would mention to you the most admired lines.

My letters, for some time to come, will be miserable scraps, and will not be worth half a glance except to such as you who honor me so much in interesting yourself in all that concerns me.

My most respectful compliments to all your family; the kind Tutoress of my friend Coila, deserves my particular acknowledgements. The happiest night by much, of all I spent last in Edinburgh was one at Lady Wallace's.—I have the honor to be, Madam, your ever grateful humble servt. ROBT. BURNS.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, at Mossgill,
near Mauchlin.

DUNLOP [*end of March* 1788].

Dr. Sir—I had heard of your transaction about the farm before I was favoured with your letter. Indeed, I was afraid you had been going to give me up, among your literary correspondents, which would have vext me very much, as I can honestly assure you it exalts me in my own esteem to believe you find anything in my letters worth your while to purchase at the expense of writing me again, while yours are to me an interesting and delightful amusement which I would in vain attempt to equal elsewhere.

I congratulate you on the step you have taken. I am sure it renders you truely estimable and respectable, and I trust, with the steady perseverance so manly a character seems to insure, will make you independent and happy in the possession of an easie competence, and as much leizure amid rural scenes as, with what you have now seen of the world, will enable you to write as you could never have hoped to do in the former line purposed for your pursuit, nor in the City of Edr. itself, in any situation into which you might have been thrust by your friends. I hope you will not neglect the farm so far as to make you poor, and I trust your cultivation of the Muses shall one day make you rich, for, if ever you are so, I daresay, like the silk-worm, you must spin it out of yourself rather than gather it up from Mr. Miller's ground, which, however, may form a succedaneum in the meantime, and foster up patience till something else is got ready. I observe it is only prose reading you determine to renounce; allow me therefore to recommend a few poetic friends as an evening solace in your retirement. Sorry I am it must be so distant a one as almost precludes all hope of seeing you hereafter: yet let me beg a parting visit at least, before you leave Ayrshire for life, an event I look forward to with extreme regret. If you can come here any time before Sunday come eight day, and pass a day or two conveniently for yourself, you will see Coila, I hope, such as you would wish her, and you will see me, to whom your visit will be a most acceptable compliment. But should this not be in your power, I shall dine at Mount by Kilmarnock with the old Major[1] on Sunday after next to bid him adieu before I set out for the east country, and I will take the liberty to invite you to make one of the party which chance may assemble there at that time. I shall in driving through Kilmarnock leave at Wilson's[2] for you Pope's *Homer*, Dryden's *Virgil*, and Hoole's *Tasso*, which I beg leave to present as agreeable remembrances of myself, that you may sometimes when far away at sight of them think of writing me. The last is my greatest favourite, but I have not been able to procure a clean copy of it, nor in pocket volumes as I would have wished, so that it might have gone with you to the field, or wherever you went. Indeed you are very much mistaken if you believe I am pleased at your rehearsal to Mr. and Mrs. Mackenzie Their applause was a thing in course, and only compliment to you at any rate. As Mr. Wilkie says to the Duke of Argyll, your own approbation is just enough for me in the rhyming way, and I never desire to aspire at any other. As for censure, "What you applauded Envy durst not blame," so that I

am not even flattered by this praise, and your reading anything I write to other people may prevent my prattling with the careless pleasure I have formerly done to your indulgent eye, for which I write the following lines, meaning them for the first leaf of Tasso's "Jerusalem"—

> In Bourbon's Isle a far-famed garden lies,
> Cloth'd with each growth the varied world supplys;
> . . . . . .
> Pleased I select the moss rose of the west;
> Proud see your hand Old Scota's breast adorn
> With this fair flourish of her native thorn.
> . . . . . .

It will really disappoint me grievously if you don't come here, or at least to the Major's. Both I should like best, but will prefer either to neither. Besides that you will, I am sure, like to see Coila, at which the lady is still close at work. Remember you promised me your address to the wild ducks.[3] Might I beg you would let me look at the tragedy you told me you had once schemed. I will be a very hard critic on anything on that subject, but I don't think you need be afraid to show me the verses on Miss Alexander. I really wish much to see them. How your compliments are sometimes lost, and how I envied one of them! If ever my picture is painted on earth, it shall be in the character of Old Scotia calling Fame to hand on my poor little Sandie Wallace[4] to the top of the old ruinous Castle of Craigie, but I am glad my paper is done since I have got there; 'tis a miserable key for me to write on. Adieu. I send compts. from all; "Cela sans va sans dire," and I always forget to write them.—Believe me, with great affection, your obliged and obedient humble sert. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Perhaps Major Alexander Dunlop, her brother-in-law, who commanded the Enniskillens at Carthagena.

(2) Wilson was the printer of the Kilmarnock edition.

(3) "On Scaring some Water-Fowl in Loch Turit." A holograph MS. in the Lochryan collection.

(4) John Alexander Agnew Wallace, her grandson, second son and successor of Sir Thomas. The old lady cherished a dream of the restoration of her paternal estate to the family.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House, Stewarton.

MAUCHLINE, 31*st March* 1788.

I am truly sorry to tell you, Madam, that I fear it will not be

in my power to meet you at the Mount on Sunday. To come to Dunlop is impracticable; but I would earnestly wish, and will try to meet you at the old Major's.

If you go on, Madam, in the same style of complimenting me on the pleasure my correspondence gives you, you will bar my pen altogether.

Now that I am often "craz'd with care," my letters will be

> Like a twice-told tale,
> Vexing the dull ear of a drowsy man. . . ."

I claim the kind promise of your correspondence as a priviledge, as an honor; and am never better pleased than when I see a letter from you, wrote out till there is hardly blank paper enough to close it.

The Poems I promised you, I must confess debt and crave days. Till Whitsunday I shall be immersed in business, partly my own, and partly on account of some near and dear friends, that I will not have a spare moment.

I will not speak a word about your present of the books. Your kindness has already exhausted my every various expression of gratitude; and for this last instance, I am determined to be silent till I tax my invention for something new to say on the subject.

I much fear I will not be able to meet you on Sunday, but I'll try.—I have the honor to be, most gratefully, Madam, your oblidged, humble servt. ROBT. BURNS.

Burns had now settled in Ayrshire to learn the duties of an exciseman, the order for which was issued by the Board of Excise to an officer at Tarbolton on 31st March. His intention was to finish his pupilage before entering on his farm on 25th May.

Mrs. Dunlop about this time proceeded to Haddington to stay with her son (Captain John) and his wife, who resided there till their home at Morham Mains was ready for occupation.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS,
Mosegill, near Mauchline.

HADDINGTON, 16*th Apl.* 1788.
[Franked by Kerr.]

Dr. Sir—I was sorry your business prevented your coming to pass two or three days at our house, where all the family are so truly sensible to your merit, and happy in your company, but

most sensibly mortified at your not wishing to make a stretch to dine at the Mount, on a day when business could not intervene, and when I had let you know I was to be of the party, and you could have no doubt how much your being another would to me have increased the pleasure of the visit. Nay, when I had told you it was a farewell one, and that I was leaving our side of the country for a time that left me no prospect of finding you in Ayrshire at my return, I'm sure it would have been a very great inconvenience indeed that would have made me decline the pleasure of passing perhaps the last day fortune would ever throw in my power with a friend, who I knew sincerely wished it, and who omitted no occasion of telling me so: but I don't know if that is the right way of going to work with you men, who are generally most negligent in your attentions where you already know they are very much valued. But I need say no more. I am now at fourscore miles distance, probably never to be nearer you again, and I will indulge myself in believing you have repented what you can no longer help. It's the only time I ever wished an uneasie idea to come across you, but for once I would be gratified by knowing, as you say yourself, that conscience had blackguarded you and spit in your face for not behaving more kindly to me than you did in this instance. However, as my goodwill is founded on my admiration and esteem of your sentiments and writings, although gratitude must have greatly increast it, neglect cannot diminish, much less erase it; nor shall the wound given my pride prevent my professing myself as warmly your friend as ever, tho' you have checkt that vanity which might have been flattered by believing you in some degree mine. I met the other day coming here from Edr. a young man who seemed so fond of you that I was sorry to part from him; he told me some of your correspondents, and dwelt on every circumstance in which you were interested with apparent delight that shortened the road much to me; I don't know, but I suspect, his name was Ainslie.[1] I daresay, however, you know him, and I should suppose he knows you too, better than you will allow me to do, if you always are as ready to let slip the times that might improve our acquaintance, or let you know I was not worthy of the honour of yours—a secret I am half afraid you have already discovered, or you would not have preferred Mr. Auld to me, that Sunday when I wished you to desert church, and charitably come where you would have been able to contribute both to the happiness and improvement of your neighbours. Besides, you did not know what trouble I took for your entertainment. Coila sat on my lap

all the journey hooped in glass, and a very tender charge she was, I assure you, and one I grudge taking when I found it was to no purpose. I fretted at her company all the way home again, and on Tuesday set off for this place, where in all probability I may be kept till after midsummer. Meanwhile I would not have disturbed your hurry of business with this intrusion, had I not been afraid, if you left Ayrshire before my return, I should never have it in my power to write you again, as not knowing your future address, or whether your whole family removed along with you, and prevented my even sending a line to your brother's care after you were gone. It's a strange reason, but a very natural one, I believe, for a man. You say your pen will be stopt by my expressing the pleasure I have in your correspondence. This will indeed be very cross, but cannot prevent my pleasing myself by frequently writing you, even should I never send my scrawls your length. You told me you liked rhyme. I felt that when you wrot I liked it too, and so I fell a-chiming words; just like an ugly woman who sees a new cap look well on a beauty, and forgets but what it should become her too, nor can even a sight of herself in the glass remove her error, but she exhibits a view of her cap and her folly to others, as I have done of my water-gruel lays to you, till I doubt you are sick of both them and I. Yet as I am living in a farmer's house, that very circumstance recalls you to my mind, and adds fervour to my wishes that it may ever prove a scene of inspiration and happiness, unrepining ease and independence to you, as well as to those with whom I inhabit at present. Should it turn out the seat of disappointment and regret to either you or them, I'm sure neither the one nor the other guess how much it would break in upon my tranquillity to know the melancholy truth, though I should still like that confidence which allowed me to participate even the bitter cup allotted for my friends. But let me not anticipate what I hope is not in fate; but rather fill my paper, since you like it blackened all over, with rhymes suggested by reading some poetry very full of pompous machinery, and supposing you had presented it to some of your fair friends to whom you seem inclinable to introduce the poetic merit of others as well as your own.

> With flaming fancy and in florid stile
> When wit addrest the beauties of our Isle
> And art was taxt with elegance to tell
> What virtue most all others could excell:
> . . . . . .

I shall also transcribe a letter I wrot the other day to a friend

of mine who, I believe partly to provoke me, said there had been no poet in the British dominions since Pope, nor would ever be another; that poesy was at a poor pitch, the Muse of England a milkmaid, Ireland a cook, and Scotland a plowman, and concluded by running down the productions of the two pens he thought I took most interest in, yours and Moore's Travels. I was not pleased, and it was thus I told it:—

> To you Dr. K . . . y I point these lays
> Howe'er Dan Pope has huckster'd all your praise,
> Sure though your friend should write a sacred book,
> You'd rank it with the milkmaid or the cook;
> For with the plowman I dare not compare
> Th' unrivalled glory of the Shire of Air.
> . . . . . .

If you find leisure or inclination to write me, address for me at Haddington, and if you wish me to write, send me your address in future.

You see I have, according to custom, scrawled over my paper. You will hardly believe I am a negligent correspondent to all the world, and my very best friends find great fault with me on this score. I suspect you would be glad I gave them more and you less of my ink, but I wish you would take revenge in kind, and study what you say as little as I do. If you write with as good will, it can cost you nothing. I hope you got the books safe, and find pleasure in reading them. I shall be glad to have your comments on them and me too, if you please, if you will just say only what you think, instead of thinking what you shall say. I expect this will cost you nothing but the trouble of reading, which to a man of business no doubt will be very dear postage, perhaps more than you will ever pay. Should you never get down this length, you cannot guess how sincerely I am, dr. sir, your much obliged friend and humble servt.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

I have your *Faery Queen* here. I don't know how I shall contrive to get her returned; you must instruct me. I never read her with pleasure before. I think you have taught me to understand Spenser, and I thank you for that and all the superiour poetic pleasures for which I am your debtor. Adieu.

(1) In all probability Robert Ainslie, the lawyer's apprentice, with whom Burns had become intimate in Edinburgh in the spring of 1787.

To Mrs. Dunlop.

Mauchline, *28th April* 1788.

Madam—Your powers of reprehension must be great indeed, as I assure you they made my heart ache with penitential pangs, even though I was really not guilty. As I commence farmer at Whitsunday, you will easily guess I must be pretty busy; but that is not all. As I got the offer of the Excise business without solicitation; and as it costs me only six weeks' attendance for instruction, to entitle me to commission, which commission lies by me, and at any future period, on my simple petition, can be resumed; I thought five and thirty pounds a year was no bad *dernier ressort* for a poor poet, if fortune in her jade tricks should kick him down from the little eminence to which she has lately helped him up.

For this reason, I am at present attending these instructions, to have them completed before Whitsunday. Still, madam, I prepared with the sincerest pleasure to meet you at the Mount, and came to my brother's on Saturday night to set out on Sunday; but for some nights preceding I had slept in an apartment where the force of the winds and the rains was only mitigated by being sifted through numberless apertures in the windows, walls, etc. In consequence I was on Sunday, Monday, and part of Tuesday unable to stir out of bed, with all the miserable effects of a bad cold.

You see, madam, the truth of the French maxim, *Le vrai n'est pas toujours le vrai-semblable;* your last was so full of expostulation, and was something so like the language of an offended friend, that I began to tremble for a correspondence, which I had with grateful pleasure set down as one of the greatest enjoyments of my future life. . . .

Your books have delighted me: Virgil, Dryden, and Tasso were all equally strangers to me; but of this more at large in my next. R. B.

The above letter is of the same date as that in which Burns made the first mention (to James Smith) of his acknowledgment of Jean Armour as his wife. It is possible that the marriage had at least as much to do with his failure to meet Mrs. Dunlop at the Mount as the cold which laid him up at Mossgiel (note the allusion to "near and dear friends" in his letter of 31st March). From motives which are explained below (p. 63),

he breathed no word of the momentous step he had taken in any of his letters of the subsequent month to Mrs. Dunlop.

To Mrs. Dunlop.

Mauchline, *4th May* 1788.

Madam—Dryden's *Virgil* has delighted me. I do not know whether the critics will agree with me, but the *Georgics* are to me by far the best of Virgil. It is indeed a species of writing entirely new to me, and has filled my head with a thousand fancies of emulation; but alas! when I read the *Georgics*, and then survey my own powers, 'tis like the idea of a Shetland pony drawn up by the side of a thorough-bred hunter to start for the plate. I own I am disappointed in the *Æneid*. Faultless correctness may please, and does highly please, the lettered critic; but to that aweful character I have not the most distant pretensions. I do not know whether I do not hazard my pretensions to be a critic of any kind, when I say that I think Virgil, in many instances, a *servile* copier of Homer. If I had the *Odyssey* by me, I could parallel many passages where Virgil has evidently copied, but by no means improved, Homer. Nor can I think there is any thing of this owing to the translators; for, from every thing I have seen of Dryden, I think him in genius and fluency of language, Pope's master. I have not perused Tasso enough to form an opinion: in some future letter you shall have my ideas of him; though I am conscious my criticisms must be very inaccurate and imperfect, as there I have ever felt and lamented my want of learning most. R. B.

Ad. Mr. Robert Burns.

Haddington, *May* 1788.

Dr. Sir—I believe you have sent me your cold in your letter, for I have had it pretty severely for some days past. I indeed in some degree deserved this at your hand from the unsympathizing manner in which I received the intelligence of your illness, for I will honestly confess I have very seldom been so much pleased to hear of any body's good health as I was to read your sickness under your hand, especially as I looked on your writing as a proof of your recovery. Your giving me two letters for one is to me perfect conviction that you have some little pleasure in mine. I shall therefore henceforth dispense with apologies, and gratify my own vanity by implicitly believing, when you don't see me or let me hear from you, that it is a mutual disappointment to both. I am sure it will always be at least so to one.

> Yes, Burns, when others court the painter's aid,
> Or bid the torch reflect the profile shade,
> The light is shifted and the object plac'd
> To shape the image to the wearer's taste;
> My pen oft draws a picture of the mind,
> Th' unstudy'd present to your trust consign'd.
> . . . . . .

I believe the critics of all ages have agreed with you as to the *Georgics* of Virgil. I don't know if I guess right, but I should suspect the translators would have suited better had Pope and Dryden exchanged authors. Dryden has infinite force and fire, but something indelicate and, I imagine, unfitted for the measured strain of the *Æneid* and the polite Augustan Court. Yet, unless you feel what I mean, which is possibly all a chimera, I don't know how to express it myself, but I think Mr. M'Kenzie could describe it better. Meantime you will not be pleased with Tasso neither if you dislike the imitation of Homer, which none of the Epic poets have ever yet, I believe, ventured to shun, but on the contrary all dragged servilely in his wake—at least all them I have ever seen or heard any account of. I have been told the Italian Ariosto has struck out a path for himself, but I cannot read him in the original, and I don't know if he is translated into English.

Tell me your opinion of the following lines,[1] I mean your idea of the capacity of their writer to please the publick in some novel or miscellaneous productions. He is fallen from affluence to penury with a very large family, for whom he is wholly unsuited to make any effort in any other line. I once gave him my advice to write. He expatiated on the difficulties, and ran down the attempts of several of my favourites to illustrate his theory. I wrot him a few lines which I sent you in my last letter, and to which this is his reply, of which I cannot be supposed a judge after the flummery with which it sets out, especially as I believe his great partiality to me makes whatever he says half earnest, and unaccountable whim guides all his partialities. But I have not left room for the lines, so must inclose them, begging you may return them to me here. I admire your criticizims, and the more that you call them unlettered, though I can hardly believe them so; but I must still more approve the very great prudence and good sense you have shown in regard to your commission, these not being generally the predominate features that characterize the favourites of the Muses, or the *forte* of those whose warm affections and keen passions give energy to poetic expression. It therefore gives me double pleasure to commend where I could

have entertained most dubiety of your superiority. Adieu. My inclosed poet has a wife and about a dozen poor children.

F. D.

(1) The lines have not been preserved, nor is the author's name known.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
at Mr. Dunlop's, Haddington.

MAUCHLINE, *27th May* 1788.

Madam—I have been torturing my Philosophy to no purpose, to account for that kind Partiality of yours, which, unlike every other of my Patronesses and Patrons in upper life, has followed me in my return to my native shade of life, with assiduous benevolence. Often did I regret in the fleeting hours of my late will-o'-wisp appearance that, "Here I had no continuing city"; and, but for the material consolation of a few solid guineas, could almost lament the time that a momentary acquaintance with wealth and splendor put me so much out of conceit with the sworn companions of my road through Life—Insignificance and Poverty.

It is so common with Poets, when their Patrons try their hand at a Rhyme, to cry up the Honble. or Rt. Honble. performance as Matchless, Divine, etc., that I am afraid to open my mouth respecting your poetic extempores that you occasionally favor me with: I will only say, you cannot oblidge me more than sending them me. For my own part, I have extensive rhyming Projects in my head, but at present cannot for my soul tag a stanza.

29th.

There are few circumstances relating to the unequal distribution of the good things of this life that give me more vexation (I mean in what I see around me) than the Importance that the GREAT bestow on their trifles and small matters in family affairs, compared with the same, the very same things on the contracted scale of a cottage. Last afternoon, I had the honor to spend an hour or two at a good woman's fireside, where the homely planks that composed the floor were decorated with a splendid carpet, and the gay table sparkled with silver and china. 'Tis now about term day, and there has been a revolution among those creatures who, tho' in appearance, Partakers, and equally noble Partakers of the same Nature with Madame; yet are from time to time, their nerves, their sinews, their health, strength, wisdom, experience, genius, time, nay a good part of their very thoughts,

sold for months and years, anxious Drudges, sweating, weary slaves, not only to the necessities, the conveniences, but the caprices of the IMPORTANT FEW. We talk'd of the insignificant Creatures; nay, notwithstanding their general stupidity and Rascality, did some of the poor devils the honor to commend them. But, light be turf upon his breast who taught—"Reverence Thyself!" We looked down on the unpolished wretches, their impertinent wives and clouterly brats, as the lordly Bull does on the little dirty ant-hill, whose puny inhabitants he crushes in the carelessness of his ramble, or tosses in air in the wantonness of his pride.

I return you the Poem with my thanks for the perusal. Alas, Madam! the very ingenious author deserves a better friend than the Press. I feel most truly for him; but no writing in this our day will take, except very transcendant excellence indeed, or Novelty.

I have often had it in my head to write to you in my miscellaneous way, a paragraph or sheet now and then as the spirit moves me; but with all my loyalty for his most sacred and most sapient Majesty, George III., by the grace of God, REX, I hate and abhor his exorbitant Postages.

My old direction—at Mauchline, will find me.—I have the honor to be most gratefully, Madam, your humble servt.

ROBT. BURNS.

Do let me know when my brother Farmer's [Captain Dunlop's] family increases. R. B.

Ad. Mr. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House.

[28*th May* 1788.]

Sir—I mentioned to your Mother in a letter I wrote her yesterday, which is the third or fourth I have wrote her to Haddington, that my Philosophy was gravelled to account for that Partiality from the house of Dunlop of which I have the honor to be so much the Object. Do you know that except from your Mother and the good family, my existence or non-existence is now of as little importance to that Great World I lately left, as the satellites of the Georgium Sidus is to a parcel of your Ditchers. I foresaw this from the beginning. Ambition could not form a higher wish than to be wedded to Novelty; but I retired to my shades with a little comfortable pride and a few comfortable pounds; and even there I enjoy the peculiar happiness of Mrs. Dunlop's friendship and correspondence, a happiness I shall ever

gratefully prize next to the dearest ties that wind about my heart, so, in my Ploughman Compliment, I bid the World GUDE SPEED!

Your Mother never hinted at the report of my late change in life, and I did not know how to tell her. I am afraid that perhaps she will not entirely enter into the motives of my conduct, so I have kept aloof from the affair altogether. I saw, Sir, that I had a once, and still much-lov'd fellow-creature's happiness or misery among my hands; and I could not dally with such a matter. Pride and seeming justice like true murderous King's Advocates talked much of injuries and wrongs; but Generosity, Humanity, and Forgiveness were such irresistible Counsel for the poor Pannel, that a Jury of old Attachments and new Endearments brought in a verdict—NOT GUILTY!

I shall be at Glasgow in the middle of next week, and if I find you at home,[1] I shall certainly take the opportunity of assuring you *in propria persona* how much I have the honor to be, Sir, your ever grateful hum. servt. ROBT. BURNS.

MAUCHLINE, Saturday morn.

(1) At Dunlop, which lies between Mauchline and Glasgow.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Mosgill,
near Mauchline.

HADDINGTON, *4th June* 1788.
[Franked by Kerr.]

I don't remember whether it is Solomon or Lord Chesterfield that says "Go to the ant and learn wisdom." Instead of torturing your philosophy for the solution of an easy question, let me refer you to the Mouse or the Mountain Daisey, to the Cotter or the Farmer's Auld Mare, to things animate and things inanimate.

O Nature all thy shews and forms
To feeling, pensive hearts have charms;
Whether the Summer kindly warms,
Wi' life and light,
Or Winter howls in gusty storms,
The long dark night!

Yet trust me, of all her shews the most pleasantly interesting is the mind that marks the rest, and whose language, like a fine cut seal, imprints them on the soul with the most beautiful, clear, soft and lasting impressions. 'Tis here, as in a glass, we expect to meet the fairest reflection of all God's works, nay even to read our own thoughts to double advantage, when we happen to meet them better arrayed than ever they could have left home, and in

the best company good sense, taste, or information can place around them. Is not such a correspondence a rational delight, and does not one owe some partiality, as well as some gratitude, to whoever is willing to indulge them with so peculiar a pleasure, especially if it is done with the unconstrained freedom which nothing but friendship and esteem can ever prompt? Now, I hope I have fully explained and accounted for the tax I have wished to subject you to, and in which I am sometimes vain enough to almost believe you might yourself have some satisfaction as well as me, since you have had the patience to read and the good nature to say you were pleased with receiving the scratches I have hitherto exposed to your eye, wholly to indulge myself, and try to draw you to retaliation. Just at the moment when I begun to hope I had succeeded, a circumstance staggers my faith. I am told in a letter that you have been a month married. I am unwilling to believe so important an era of your life has past, and you have considered me as so very little concerned in what concerned you most as never to give me the most distant hint of your wishing such a change or of its accomplishment, while I have had the favour of hearing two three times of you during that interim. Allow me, however, married or unmarried, to wish you joy, which I assure you I do most sincerely in every situation in which yourself or Providence can put you. Don't, I beg you, check the inclination, should it ever seize you, of writing a miscellaneous page to me, spite of all the kings of Europe. It is true George Rex has provoked me so far, had it been female to curse any man or thing, I could have sometimes anathematized the postages, which have made me drop several correspondences in my time, and had I not sometimes been able, or at least believed I had been able, to get a sheet conveyed now and then gratis to you, I should frequently have been ashamed to make you pay for so many. But since I came here, I persuaded myself you had not; do tell me if I am mistaken. For my paying, don't mind that. It is true my children have and are intituled to my income; their happiness is all my end and aim in life, and their advantage my honour and my duty. To this I sacrifice what many would account the necessaries of life. The letters of a very few friends are my sole personal pleasure and expense. I don't grudge it myself, and no one else ought to grudge it for me. I require neither fine gown nor splendid carpet, nor could know to value them like your acquaintance, from whom I covet nothing except your visit, which I shrewdly suspect I would have held in juster estimation than she was

capable of, though I could not equal her generosity in giving so largely to the poor in the distribution of stupidity or rascality, where I have a far meaner opinion of their claims than she and you discerned for. But every one has their own hobby-horse in this world. The honest woman, looking with self-complacence at the carpet, drawing up her head, blest herself in being unlike those poor publicans, and canters on as proud as a peacock. "Hiegh-up," says you, helping her on, but, turning to me, tips the wink with a sneer, half mirth, half malice. But suppress, if you please, the later half; it is below a man to be angry at a child for being happy with his drum, and proud how loud he can beat and deaf you with its noise. Poor infant! his faculties are satisfied; so shall yours in the wide round of time be thankful their circle is more extensive, and you shall find imployment walking it over when the parchment of his drum-head is fairly beat out. Then will you be dozing with old Homer till fame beat the *reveillé* and set you at work again—I would fain know upon what plan, if you dare trust me, but don't if you are reluctant. I would not incroach upon your confidence, tho' nobody would enjoy it more were it a voluntary gift. You say you cannot tag a stanza. I am sympathetically out of tune too, which I daresay you are glad of, and no one else will be sensible of the misfortune. I hope your voice will soon recover. I should truly regret your being deprived of so great a pleasure, and from which I expect to see yourself and the world draw so much profit. Besides, should I continue my original dumb fit, which I think highly probable, your notes will amuse me much more agreeably than my own, and I would not willingly be deprived of so charming a succedaneum. This hard word puts me in mind to ask you the meaning of one I met in Lady Mary Wortley Montague's Letters (a book well worth your reading, as she is esteemed the first female scribe in Britain, perhaps in the world). The word was a sheep newly *raddled*. I have no dictionary, nor nobody near me wiser than myself. I will be proud to have you for an instructer, if you will do me that favour I fear you have not liked Tasso. Tell me why, yet do not instruct me there, for there is a joy in approving from the heart I would not like to be informed out of by my own or a better judgment. Yet, although I would be sorry you did not like my favourite, I have no objection to hearing every fault you will deign to point out in him, for, if I may judge by myself, to critisize a poet is a sign of finding him well worth notice, and I do not insist that my dead favourites should be held quite perfect, though I may sometimes

receive but awkwardly ill-natured animadversions on the living. I believe there is a letter for you from my Anthony lying at Lady Wallace's, unless she sent it to Wilson by the Kilmarnock carrier. Poor fellow! He is not sailed yet from Europe, nor my grandson arrived. I will write you when he does, if I can know that this costs you nothing, but at this distance the charge far outgoes the profit. Yet admire my economy, both in the size of my sheet, and the smallness of my type. Pray, copy me here, where alone I pretend to excell. Your hand, though characteristically original, like its owner, is extravagantly large, and a perfect luxury which I have thrown in the Atlantic Ocean ever since I had so many sons on the farther side of it, when I first adopted a crow quill, since reserved for my friends, and therefore, whenever I have one, always sacred to you from, dear sir, your obliged and obedient humble sert. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

John and his wife offer compts. with me. When you get to Edr., if you should not recover what, as a Free Mason, you must this day suffer for your loyalty to your Grand Master so much s to be able to do it sooner; for I really long for your answer, should it be only yes or no to a question which I believe, though I have not asked, but which you must surely guess. Adieu.

Burns went to reside at Ellisland on 13th June. As the farm buildings had to be reconstructed, he left his wife and child at Mauchline, and while building operations were going on, lived himself in a hut about half a mile below the farm, under the shadow of the tower of the Isle.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP, at Mr. Dunlop's,
Haddington.

ELLISLAND, 13*th* (14*th*) *June* 1788.

Where'er I roam, whatever realms I see,
My heart, untravell'd, fondly turns to thee;
Still to my friend it turns with ceaseless pain,
And drags at each remove a lengthening chain.—GOLDSMITH.

This is the second day, my honored friend, that I have been on my farm. A solitary inmate of an old, smoky *Spence* [apartment]; far from every object I love, or by whom I am beloved; nor any acquaintance older than yesterday, except *Jenny Geddes*, the old mare I ride on; while uncouth cares and novel plans hourly insult my awkward ignorance and bashful inexperience. There is a foggy atmosphere native to my soul in the hour of care, conse-

quently the dreary objects seem larger than the life. Extreme sensibility, irritated and prejudiced on the gloomy side by a series of misfortunes and disappointments, at that period of my existence when the soul is laying in her cargo of ideas for the voyage of life, is, I believe, the principal cause of this unhappy frame of mind.

> The valiant, in himself what can he suffer?
> Or what need he regard his *single* woes? etc.

Your surmise, madam, is just: I am, indeed, a husband. . . .

I found a once much-loved and still much-loved female literally and truly cast out to the mercy of the naked elements, but as I enabled her to *purchase* a shelter, and there is no sporting with a fellow-creature's happiness or misery. . . .

The most placid good-nature and sweetness of disposition; a warm heart, gratefully devoted with all its powers to love me; vigorous health and sprightly cheerfulness, set off to the best advantage by a more than common handsome figure; these, I think, in a woman, may make a good wife, though she should never read a page but "The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament," nor have danced in a brighter assembly than a penny-pay wedding.

To BURNS.

HADDINGTON, *16th June* 1788.

Sir—'Tis indulging myself in an agreeable manner to sit down and write what comes uppermost, and direct the sheet to one whose every line I receive with delight, were it only to proceed from the single remembrance of its being the produce of that pen which has formerly obliged the world, and more especially myself, more than I can express. Nothing can henceforward fall from an author whose native ideas have once very forcibly struck our imagination, that will be read with indifference independent of its real merit. Cease then to say your portion in life must be poverty and insignificance. As to the first, I shall not presume to foretell, although I think the supposition very improbable. For the other, I aver it is utterly impossible, if Britain is not overrun by something worse than Goths and Vandals. I think you above affectation of any kind, so that I am afraid some temporary depression of spirits has suggested this injustice to yourself and others that could lead you for a single moment to conceive the possibility of your being overlooked by any one whose esteem you could value or wish to cultivate. I wish I could help to eradicate such an error from your mind for ever, and teach you to respect

yourself more than to give harbour to so degrading a suspicion. I am sure female fancy itself could never invent a more improbable poetic fiction than you have done in broaching such an out-of-the-world notion. Belisarius blind and begging is a joke to it; Rousseau, indeed, poor man! became an idiot; so did Swift; yet no future event could rob either of their former fame. This was the treasure of the soul. Besides, as Alexander the Great said, the only thing in this world we can never lose is what we have given away to our friends. Now, the ideas a poet has put on paper are ever his; they are given generously to his friends and foes; the world must enjoy them; if they once had merit they can never lose it; if his genius rises, it confers a brighter luster on the past; if it falls, the twielight of his day is forgotten, but cannot obscure his meridian glory. The man who has once added honour to his name will feel himself borne up by that name ever after; yet our name cannot convey our nature; I wish to God it did, since I was once a Wallace. But, alas! no. You have a namesake here—a wright [carpenter]; he has made money, gained respect, and is a great man in his way. He told last day he had payed ten guineas for a cow; 'twas observed much might be drawn here by selling milk. "Yes," replies this philanthropist; "I sold it for some days, but I was not able to endure the sight of so many miserable wretches as came to buy, and now I order it to be given to the hogs." This much for the living. My contemplations have been among the dead. The Church is a fine ruin, and the tombs are diversifyed. One stone is thus inscribed:—

> Here lies, I want room to say what,
> Think what a woman should be: she was that.

The Minister wrote below with a bit of chalk—

> A woman should be wife and mother,
> She was neither one nor t'other.

Another epitaph is thus:—

> O Death, how absolute thy sway,
> When thou commandest we must obey;
> 'Tis vain in mighty strength to trust,
> For strong thou crumblest into dust.

Is not this an Irishism? I would transcribe some more of them were it not that I have some hope I may one day read them or point them to your perusal on the spot. I too had the chalk in my hand, and wrot spontaneously on a pillar of a falling arch

by which I stood, forgetting but what I was at home, scribbling to you :—

O Time ! O Death ! destructive pair. Nor life nor stone thou knowest to spare.
Church, men, and monuments, that here consume, cry Vain is Vanity ; thy very tomb . . .

17*th* at Night.

I wrote the above yesterday ; the handwriting is a true emblem of the writer's mind. I have slept since, but, what is perhaps worse, have waked again ; therefore will endeavour to forget the churchyard and all its powers over me so far as to write legibly. I have walked up a very high hill above the town ; it is a glorious landscape. I wished for your pen to describe it and the inconceivable wildness of the spot just by the summit, which commands so vast a variety of objects rather than a great extent of space. Coming down the hill, I took a letter of yours out of my pocket ; it enclosed a fragment of a poem you once sent me. You called it a sin-offering [see Appendix] ; perhaps it should have been also a burnt-offering ; yet I should have regretted it had, for I confess I thought it an incense of a sweet-smelling savour. But, auricular confession being no part of our creed, perhaps it is a sin to say so. If it is, I know you will readily pronounce my pardon in the words of the Church ; if not, I shall write them more humbly as a prayer "Your sins be forgiven you," and this may answer for both ; or, should all the world thrust themselves in, I would only say Amen the more heartily. Yet, indeed I have committed a very heavy trespass on this very paper, for which conscience just now stares me in the face. This was in the mention I have made of Mr. Burns, the wright. While I am sitting writing I hear the company talking of him. They are telling that since he got money his father's affairs have gone to ruin, and his prosperity never knew the happiness his son's unwearied attentions have heaped upon his decline ; besides which, he has been a father to his brothers and sisters. Let me retract and cry out, "O Burns, live for ever !" And every time I think upon thy honoured name, let it be for a bridle upon my malevolent tongue, and a rebuke to my rash heart. Let me henceforward learn not to judge lest I be judged, and it will not be the first moral lesson thy name hath taught me, and which I shall practise with the more pleasure for thy sake. Adieu. It is midnight ; the candle dies out before me. I know not where you are or how or when you may see this. Besides, I believe you don't read my scrawls, or forget the one end before you get at the other, for you have never told me the

meaning of *raddle*, whether you were married or a batchelor, or whether you paid for my letters or got them gratis; whether you were coming to Edr. now at all or when; and if you would come here and see me, as I believe my stay will be much longer than I had thought for—perhaps still two or three months. Now, I won't send you another scrape of a pen, good, bad, or indifferent, till you give a categorical reply to every one of these queries in order.

FINIS.

The letter which follows is of particular interest in so far as it furnishes the *motif* for Burns's famous declaration—"To jealousy or infidelity I am an equal stranger," which, as will be seen, was written in answer to some very sagacious and very plainly expressed forebodings of Mrs. Dunlop's.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS,
Mauchline.

24th June 1788.
[Franked by Kerr.]

Dr. Burns—I have yours telling me of your marriage—the only circumstance I had been told before, and almost the only one you mention of an occurrence where I sincerely wish to be acquainted with every particular that can influence your future happiness or figure in the world. Your picture of the character and disposition ought to make a rational man happy, if fairly drawn, and properly accompany'd, but much depends on the man as well as on the poor female, from whom you men generally require all, and to whom a great many of you give nothing. I sit down, as the phrase is, to give you joy. Were fate in my disposal, Heaven knows the words would not be ill chosen, but as matters stand, I must correct the expression, and confine myself to the sincerest wishes that the phantom may never elude your grasp, but smile upon every moment of your life and realize what "youthful poets fancy in their dreams." Meanwhile, I wish you had told me a thousand things to direct my dreams with regard to the scene your last opens for my friend, and which must to one of your exquisite sensibility prove unbounded bliss or misery. I wish to take no information from the world. They are generally prejudiced, and more with regard to you than others; but I would fain ask you if you can forgive me questions that are prompted by goodwill, but may, I fear, seem encroaching and impertinent. Literary merit is superfluous, often hurtful, and hardly ever useful to our sex. In your wife there is one

quality I must wish added to those you enumerate, which is activity and capacity in the domestic life. In that line to which a large lease ties you, without these I fear you should never take possession of that, but trust entirely to that commission which I had hitherto regarded as only a forlorn hope, having built a fine fairy fabrick on the serenity and dignity of that rural scene from whence I expect to see your lucubrations issue to light and bring home a plenteous crop of money and applause to your humble independent dwelling. Indeed, if Mrs. Burns possess that household mettle which a great many very valuable women in other respects are deficient in, I still think this your plan, and will still hope to see it crowned with success, tho' I am sensible your marriage will lose you a number of your former adherents. Whether your wife was or is only now become the mother of your children—[is] a point in which I anxiously wish myself to be satisfied. I feel all the indelicacy of my doing so; yet cannot help putting the question. I believe all your motives of action are noble and generous, but would be glad to exchange surmise for certainty, and to be able to assure others of what I make no doubt of myself. Tell me, therefore, I beg you, what prevented your marriage long ago, and on what side the demurs came that are now removed; for I hope the mutual interest of both and the advantage of the little ones. O Burns! since I have so far overleapt decorum as touch upon this subject, let me go one step further, and tell you where I tremble for your peace. You say there is a heavy atmosphere about your soul that shews painful objects larger than the life. You have tryed your influence and found it too powerful with a young innocent girl, who sacrificed everything valuable to convince you of her affection. Set a guard over your heart, lest the jaundiced eye of jealousie should one day view this proof through that magnifying medium, and blast that confidence in your wife which she so implicitly reposed in you, and which is the only bond of conjugal tranquillity. Take my word for it, time and possession does not more loosen the fondness of most men than it rivets that of most women, especially if they are living a retired, industrious life, and employed in the care of children with whom they share a husband's tender attachment and assiduous attentions. To please him is the aim of every wife and reward of every anxiety and toil. Besides, you ought to do justice to yourself, and be convinced there is little chance of your losing by comparison in any rank, and none of being equalled in your own. Yet, if report has not done you great injury, you have indulged in a freedom of life that poisons

a man's mind for a husband, by leading him to measure his ideas of every woman by the standard of the very worst among whom he has connected himself. Should this be your case, the extreme sensibility of your nature, the very qualities that suit one most to receive or confer happiness, would irritate the slightest dubiety, an ambiguous look or word, into a ferment that nothing would ever be able to allay; and you would become as superiour in wretchedness as you have already shewed yourself in poetic merit, and I believe are in real worth and goodness of heart. If you have hitherto wandered in the devious paths of pleasure, 'tis now time to strike into the straight road, for no truth is more uncontrovertible, than that matrimonial infidelity in even the most wealthy man hurts his family's interest, but in narrow circumstances leads to unavoidable ruin. You lie open to more temptation this way than most other men, by a more extensive familiarity with more distant ranks in life, and this will be encreast by many circumstances should you quit the farm for the Excise, which I somehow fear you will do. That is a life of more idleness, more dissipation and riot, less innocence or principle, and one's time is in general spent in worse, meaner, and more degrading as well as more corrupting company. But forgive me; this is Sunday night, and I have been preaching, and I dread you will think on a very strange-chosen text. Yet it is just what I think, and so you shall have it for better for worse, like a wife, and may God bless you with both! I had wrot the other sheet last week, but knew not what to do with it till I heard from you. What terrible change do I feel [in] this correspondence within this few days. 'Tis become like writing to the East Indies. Letters may lie so long before you can see or answer them. Could I have foreseen that in a few months you would be married and banished Ayrshire, I had never wrot you at all. You will ask me who would have been the loser by that. I own I would: yet you may remember I once told you I had given over writing to Capt. Woodburn [see page 6] because I believed he was quite happy. I most sincerely wish I may soon have the same reason to drop you too, though I doubt it will never be in my power without extreme reluctance to hold my tongue or pen where I have learnt to please myself so oft with both. I am quite happy you liked Coila so well, and greatly flattered that the faults you found were those I had pointed to before, but the lady was not so willing to trust my skill as yours. For me she made no alteration, but looked on yours as the voice of inspiration and obey'd it accordingly, not believing herself intitled like Joseph or Daniel to know a vision

better than he that saw it, though setting her own skill against mine who could only guess at it. I had a great wish to have sent you a fiddle as a marriage present suited to promote harmony in your household, and bring you in tune after this stupid harangue, but I want ear to chuse and knowledge how to get anything to this remote abode of yours, even a letter, and I have no pleasure in writing when I cannot guess when to look for an answer. I have this moment a letter from Anthony; he is at Brussels, where he says he hears "you have got on shackles. Don't I think you must be like all our great geniuses a little crackt? Spite of which he sincerely wishes you happy." Now, I am up with you for your idea of any of my family deserving to be lampooned, especially as you will not know whether to believe an article from the *Brussels Gazette* or not. Farewell! I am sorry you can only count me so *far off* a friend, spite of which I ever am, Dr. Sir, your obliged and obedient, humble sert., and I beg leave to assure you your nearest relation or warmest friend cannot esteem you more or wish you happier than does

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

The Capt. and his wife offer compts.

Kerr did not despatch the preceding letter (from Glasgow) till 5th July. On the 5th Burns passed through the ordeal of confirmation of his irregular marriage. He seems to have thereafter made another flying visit to his farm in Nithsdale, and to have returned to Mauchline before the 10th, when he wrote to Mrs. Dunlop in reply to hers of the 24th June.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

MAUCHLINE, 10*th July*[1] 1788.

My much honored Friend—Yours of the 24th June is before me. I found it, as well as another valued friend—my wife, waiting to welcome me to Ayrshire: I met both with the sincerest pleasure.

When I write you, madam, I do not sit down to answer every paragraph of yours, by echoing every sentiment, like the faithful Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled, answering a speech from the best of kings! I express myself in the fulness of my heart, and may perhaps be guilty of neglecting some of your kind inquiries; but not from your very odd reason that I do not read your letters. All your epistles for several months have cost me nothing except a swelling throb of gratitude, or a deep-felt sentiment of veneration.

Mrs. Burns, madam, is the identical woman. . . . When she first found herself "as women wish to be who love their lords," as I loved her nearly to distraction, we took steps for a private marriage. Her parents got the hint; and not only forbade me her company and their house, but on my rumoured West Indian voyage, got a warrant to put me in jail 'till I should find security in my about-to-be paternal relation. YOU know my lucky reverse of fortune. On my *éclatant* return to Mauchline, I was made very welcome to visit my girl. The usual consequences began to betray her; and as I was at that time laid up a cripple in Edinburgh, she was turned, literally turned, out of doors, and I wrote to a friend to shelter her 'till my return, when our marriage was declared. Her happiness or misery were in my hands, and who could trifle with such a deposit?

To jealousy or infidelity I am an equal stranger: My preservative from the first is the most thorough consciousness of her sentiments of honor, and her attachment to me; my antidote against the last is my long and deep-rooted affection for her. I can easily *fancy* a more agreeable companion for my journey of life, but, upon my honor, I have never *seen* the individual instance. In housewife matters, of aptness to learn and activity to execute, she is eminently mistress; and during my absence in Nithsdale, she is regularly and constantly apprentice to my mother and sisters in their dairy and other rural business. The Muses must not be offended when I tell them, the concerns of my wife and family will, in my mind, always take the *pas;* but I assure them their ladyships will ever come next in place. Circumstanced as I am, I could never have got a female partner, for life, who could have entered into my favourite studies, relished my favourite authors, etc., without probably entailing on me, at the same time, expensive living, fantastic caprice, perhaps apish affectation, with all the other blessed boarding-school acquirements, which (*pardonnez moi, Madame*) are sometimes to be found among females of the upper ranks, but almost universally pervade the misses of the would-be-gentry. You are right, that a bachelor state would have insured me more friends; but, from a cause you will easily guess, conscious peace in the enjoyment of my own mind, and unmistrusting confidence in approaching my God, would seldom have been of the number.

I like your way in your churchyard lucubrations. Thoughts that are the spontaneous result of accidental situations, either respecting health, place, or company, have often a strength, and always an originality, that would in vain be looked for in fancied

circumstances and studied paragraphs. For me, I have often thought of keeping a letter, *in progression*, by me, to send you when the sheet was written out. Now I talk of sheets, I must tell you my reason for writing to you on paper of this kind [folio], is my pruriency of writing to you at large. A page of post is on such a dissocial, narrow-minded scale, that I cannot abide it; and double letters, at least in my miscellaneous reverie manner, are a monstrous tax in a close correspondence. R. B.

(1) This letter has hitherto been dated August, and it was obviously so superscribed by the poet, but it is clearly that to which Mrs. Dunlop refers in hers of 22nd July, with the jocular postscript, "How fast time flies when a man is married!"

To BURNS. HADDINGTON, *22nd July* [1788].

[Yours was Agt.; how fast time flies when a man is married!]

Dr. Sir—I had yours yesterday, and would be truly pleased with and vain of myself could anything from my hand make another as happy as I felt myself at sight of the large sheet and the flattering idea which you suggest that you have another advancing on its way to succeed it, and will now and then favour me with a progressive remembrance of the miscellaneous kind, which from you will always be *something new*—the name of the very last book I have read, and some parts of which I would have liked very much to have had you read with me, as I was much more than commonly pleased with them alone, spite of rather too marked an endeavour to appear eccentrick. You don't tell me what stay you make in Ayrshire. I dare not wish it long, now that I fear your interest ought to fix you elsewhere, for you know the old adage that "A rolling stone gathers no fog" [moss], and your nest seems as it would require to be fast fogged if the birds continue to hatch thus quick in braces.[1] Children are said to be blessings. May my friends always find them so! When they are not so they are surely the bitterest vexation our hearts can know. Alas! I have felt the poisonous sting, and I think this must have been the hurt that Gavin Douglas says "Ten years in Lemnos Isle made Philoctetes skirle." It could not have been worth while to do it so long for any other wound, but of this I trust you shall never be a judge. God forbid you should! I am persuaded you deserve to be happy, and I hope Providence shall think so too. Yet sorry I am to think the scene of it must be so far from

where I have the least chance to witness it. However, I must have some shift fallen upon at least to be present with you upon paper at Ellisland. You would have valued my letter far more had it reached you in that distant, solitary abode than when it dropt in amid the circle of your friends at Mossgiel, where you were perfectly well without it, and I even suppose every faculty of your soul so wholly employed by domestic joy and conscious rectitude that I wonder you even thought of answering me at all. Believe I feel the favour and am grateful, but, oh Burns! do you remember what Hume[2] makes Lady Randolph say:—"Wretch that I am, at every happy mother I repine." Yes, the tenderness of your mention of the return to an absent wife makes my eyes flow and my heart wring. It recalls too forcibly scenes never, ah! never to return to me. I weep over the joy of my friend, but they are not tears of envy. Yet this is the weakest part of my whole soul. 'Tis here I have really felt sorrow unalloyed by hope, and, as you say, not a wish to gild the gloom unless like you I change my state, which I trust shall never happen in this world, as it certainly would be for the worse to my family and fame, and so could never be to the better for my happiness, spite of my maxim which you laughed so much at, that a woman is always a helpless waif and unprotected single, and like unsticked [unstaked] pease bladed [fouled] with every blast—of very little comfort to herself, or consequence to others. Heaven knows how different I felt the world while I met it my father's daughter or my husband's wife. Yet I ought not to complain. The world owes me nought. I never liked it at its best, but dearly well I have liked a few friends in it, and most kindly they have repaid my affection with double interest. Would to God this may be my liferent annuity as far as yet remains of it, and the rest restored in reversion hereafter. My children support me nobly, and 'tis thus I hope to be surrounded above, where even a prodigal can add joy to the Father's feast, nor could less than heavenly joy compensate the anxious vigils of a Father's broken heart. Our Father which art in heaven, Thy will be done! Of thirteen thou hast given me, three Thou hast already appointed their parent's harbingers above. If Thy wisdom sees fit to demand a tithe of those that remain, shall I dare murmur at the destination of that Power who has blest me in so many, and shall I not gratefully acknowledge that my Andrew himself has been to me better than seven sons? My girls, too, have been to me all I could wish, only that they have not yet been well married, which I must still say I think the true end of a woman's creation.

I suppose you are not to be in Edinburgh now, since you don't say so. I am sorry for it, as I must be tied still here, or at Morhame, the name of my son's farm, according to the indolence or expedition of your namesake, who is the undertaker for his house, and ought to have had it ready three months ago. But the delay in the business I came on makes me more uneasie. I wish to God it were well over! Yet half your wealth there will content me, but even for that I must still wait a great while, at least all next month. I am sure your wife should not be jealous of the Muses. These good old maiden aunts have already showed their kindness to her offspring, and I hope have yet much in store for them, if Creech or some other such young fellow don't insidiously purloin their presents. They have, too, for once appeared in the good-natured light of marriage-making, a very singular one for elderly single ladies, but indeed in their connection with you all has been extraordinary. Nor do I know how sufficiently to thank them for having introduced to my acquaintance the most original character I shall perhaps ever have an opportunity of admiring. Allow me to say you seem to build resolve on something superiour still to reason, and support the majesty of man on columns of nobler elevation than the fairest Corinthian order. You have already built yourself like Absolom a pillar, tho' not for the same reason he did, and I cannot help transcribing the inscription Lady Dundonald applyed to Commissioner Rhodes, in case you never heard it:—

> The mausoleum and the bust-room fall and crumble into dust;
> My faithful memory shall be a living monument for thee.

I had a letter the other day from my poor Anthony. He says he is afraid when you speak of him you only mean an oblique compliment through him to me, for he wrot you three months ago, but you never had *time* to write him. These are his words and way of marking them. Poor fellow! He has met a very great disappointment just now, in which I heartily share with him. Indeed, I did not think I could have been so much interested in any thing whatever. I have been reading Montrose's Memoirs to put it out of my head. I wish I had something of yours. No writer ever yet stole so sweetly on my attention as some of your pieces have already done, and surely the influence ought to increase in the same ratio with my esteem and sincere good wishes for their writer. I'm sure I am glad to think you are happy; yet I believe that very idea bursts a strong connection fancy had formed while I believed you wretched, disappointed,

and your mind a void like my own. Misery expects from misery sympathy and indulgence in her capricious, wayward moods, which she knows prosperity and ease forever disclaim. Thus, tho' I never was more pleased with you than I am at this moment, I feel a restraint hitherto unknown in expressing myself, and I am afraid you will be worse pleased with this letter than any I ever wrot you. Yet should it be so, I can no way help it, for this is, as well as the rest, the real image of myself at the instant of drawing it, and if anything in the picture is still favoured with your partiality, you will have pleasure in now and then drawing a melancholy note from the inclosed fiddle in remembrance of me. But, as it is only in a questionable shape just now, and may be transmogrified as much as you please, only honour it with your friendly acceptance, and tune it up to whatever is most in character of your friend or in unison with yourself, always considering that, as the gift of a friend is the reverse of every sacrifice to vanity, it ought to be consecrated either to use or pleasure allennerly [only]. Meanwhile, forgive my taking this liberty of offering a trifle in the only way I have it in my power. 'Tis a Scots superstition to believe a bargain always turns out much the better for being followed with a luckpenny. I'm sure nobody wishes more sincerely that Mrs. Burns and you may never be worse pleased with yours than at present. I therefore could not forgive myself had I omitted that part which, by the custom of all times and nations, friends are authorised to take in order not to hurt the future fortune of their newly shackled neighbours, friends, or acquaintances in all ranks and degrees of life, and which is regarded as a pledge of future goodwill to the contracted pair. So, your displeasure being less tremendous than my own, I have ventured, even at the risk of it, to send you a £5 card from the Thistle Bank. I am wrong, as Lord Bankton[3] said when his fourth wife mist one napkin of a dozen fine ones in a parcel. "My dr., when my last wife was buried, I forgot to draw it out in putting her corpse into the coffin. I shall behave better next time." Farewell. The only extraordinary thing I have met since I wrot you last was having much obliged a man who had never spoke to me for an hour. At last he broke out in an eager exclamation: "O madam, if you but saw the dead men's bones on Gladsmure![4] They are just five inches below the ground, and their teeth is like the very driven snow." Forasmuch as you are a poet, I do not think you can form any idea of the pleasure I felt in this address, or the reasons from whence it sprung, nor have I paper to tell you.

Only, the poor fellow was young, handsome, dying of a consumption, and losing a leg in a white swelling. This was a stage-coach adventure. I never saw him before or since. Write me soon, and oblige, Dr. Sir, your sincere friend and humble sert. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) On 3rd March 1788 Jean Armour gave birth to twin daughters, who survived only a short time.

(2) John Home's (pronounced Hume) tragedy, *Douglas.*

(3) William M'Douall, a Lord of Session, author of an *Institute of the Law of Scotland.*

(4) The battle of Prestonpans, when Prince Charles Edward defeated General Sir John Cope in 1745, is called alternatively Gladsmuir, having been fought in the East Lothian parish of that name.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

MAUCHLINE, *2nd August* 1788.

Honored Madam—Your kind letter welcomed me yesternight to Ayrshire. I am, indeed, seriously angry with you at the *quantum* of your *luckpenny;* but vexed and hurt as I was, I could not help laughing very heartily at the noble lord's apology for the missed napkin.

I would write you from Nithsdale, and give you my direction there, but I have scarce an opportunity of calling at a post-office once in a fortnight. I am six miles from Dumfries, am scarcely ever in it myself, and, as yet, have little acquaintance in the neighbourhood. Besides, I am now very busy on my farm, building a dwelling-house; as at present I am almost an evangelical man in Nithsdale, for I have scarce "where to lay my head."

There are some passages in your last that brought tears to my eyes. "The heart knoweth its own sorrows, and a stranger intermeddleth not therewith." The repository of these "sorrows of the heart" is a kind of *sanctum sanctorum;* and 'tis only a chosen friend, and that too at particular, sacred times, who dares enter into them.

> Heav'n oft tears the bosom-chords
> That nature finest strung.

You will excuse this quotation for the sake of the author. Instead of entering on this subject further, I shall transcribe you a few lines I wrote in a hermitage belonging to a gentleman in my Nithsdale neighbourhood. They are almost the only favors the muses have conferred on me in that country.

Thou whom Chance may hither lead,[1]
Be thou clad in russet weed,
Be thou deckt in silken stole,
Grave these maxims on thy soul.

Life is but a Day at most;
Sprung from Night—in Darkness lost:
Hope not Sunshine every hour,
Fear not clouds will ever lour.
Happiness is but a name,
Make Content and Ease thy aim.
Ambition is a meteor-gleam;
Fame a restless, idle dream;
Pleasures, insects on the wing
Round Peace, the tenderest flower of Spring;
Those that sip the dew alone,
Make the Butterflies thy own;
Those that would the bloom devour,
Crush the Locusts, save the Flower.
For the Future be prepar'd,
Guard, wherever thou can'st guard;
But thy Utmost duly done,
Welcome what thou can'st not shun.
Follies past, give thou to air;
Make their Consequence thy care.
Keep the name of Man in mind,
And dishonour not thy kind.
Reverence, with lowly heart,
Him whose wondrous Work thou art;
Keep His Goodness still in view,
Thy trust, and thy example too.
Stranger, go! Heaven be thy guide!
Quod the Beads-mane of Nithe-side.

Since I am in the way of transcribing, the following were the production of yesterday, as I jogged through the wild hills of New Cumnock. I intend inserting them, or something like them, in an epistle I am going to write to the gentleman on whose friendship my excise hopes depend, Mr. Graham of Fintry; one of the worthiest and most accomplished gentlemen, not only of this country, but I will dare to say it, of this age. The following are just the first crude thoughts, "unhousel'd, unanointed, unaneal'd."

Pity the tuneful muses' helpless train;[2]
Weak, timid landsmen on life's stormy main:
The world were blest, did bliss on them depend;
Ah, that "the friendly e'er should want a friend!"
The little fate bestows they share as soon;
Unlike sage, proverb'd wisdom's hard-wrung boon.
Let prudence number o'er each sturdy son
Who life and wisdom at one race begun;

Who feel by reason, and who give by rule ;
Instinct's a brute and sentiment a fool !
Who make poor "will do ' wait upon "I should";
We own they're prudent, but who owns they're good ?

Ye wise ones, hence ! ye hurt the social eye ;
God's image rudely etched on base alloy !
But come——

Here the Muse left me. I am astonished at what you tell me of Anthony's writing me. I never received it. Poor fellow ! You vex me much by telling me that he is unfortunate. I shall be in Ayrshire ten days from this date. I have just room for an old Roman farewell ! R. B.

(1) This is the first version of the verses "Written in Friar's Carse Hermitage," that which was inscribed on a window-pane in the Hermitage, and entered in the Edinburgh Commonplace Book.

(2) These lines were incorporated in the "First Epistle to Robert Graham, Esq."

[*To* Miss Rachel Dunlop.]

Mauchline, *2d August*[1] 1788.

Madam—I was in Nithsdale when your kind present and kinder letter came to Mauchline, so did not see it till yesternight that I came here.

I am in perpetual warfare with that doctrine of our reverend priesthood, that "we are born into this world bondslaves of iniquity and heirs of perdition, wholly inclined to that which is evil, and wholly disinclined to that which is good, untill by a kind of spiritual filtration or rectifying process called effectual Calling," etc., the whole business is reversed, and our connections above and below completely change place. I believe in my conscience that the case is just quite contrary. We come into this world with a heart and disposition to do good for it, untill by dashing a large mixture of base alloy called prudence *alias* selfishness, the too precious metal of the soul is brought down to the blackguard sterling of ordinary currency. This, I take it, is the reason why we of the Barbarian sex, who are so much called out to act on that profligate stage the World, come so far short of your gentler kind who bear on much richer materials an equally more elegant impression and image of infinite purity, goodness, and truth. As I am a married man, neither my knowledge of facts or impartial testimony can be doubted ; and while I can produce your kind correspondence with the poet, or in general while I can name

Mrs. Dunlop with all her daughters I can be at no loss for corroborative evidence.

Mrs. B. begs me to return to you her most gratefull thanks for your elegant little work the Cap. She says she will be hard pushed indeed for family linens if she do not make your cap grace the head of her hindmost child, tho' she should have a score. I rejoice in Coila's progress to perfection, tho' you have awaked my curiosity much to pay her my grateful respects again; but when that curiosity will be gratified heaven knows.—I have the honor to be, madam, your obt. hbl. servant,

(Signed) ROBT. BURNS.

This letter exists in the Lochryan MSS. in the form of what purports to be a copy of an original Burns letter, with at the end the initials J. A. M. or W., and the docket in another hand, "A letter of Robt. Burns the Poet to Mrs. Dunlop." If it is correctly dated, it cannot have been addressed to Mrs. Dunlop, seeing that the authenticity of the letter to her of the same date (see page 79) is not disputed; and the reference to Coila, if not also the allusion to the transition stage between Ayrshire and Ellisland, fix it down to the year 1788. We have ventured to assign the letter—which is obviously genuine Burns—to Rachel Dunlop, who, living with her brother at Dunlop, was likely to have heard of the poet's marriage from the Major at least as soon as her mother, and might well have sent a congratulatory letter with a cap for Mrs. Burns, at the same time reporting progress on her interminable picture of Coila. The allusion in the text to "Mrs. Dunlop with all her daughters," combined with the preservation of the copy at Lochryan, makes it certain that the letter was addressed to one of the family.

Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, at Mossgill,
near Mauchline.

MORHAME MAINS,[1] 9*th Agt.* 1788.

Dr. Sir—You will not grudge to pay for one letter from me rather than believe me forgetful of your goodness to me, which must appear were I not to put you to that expense, and catch the few days of your abode in Ayrshire to tell you that owing to the absence of Mr. Kerr it will not be in my power to write again for some weeks; so much I stand in awe of Mr. Pitt. Never an advice came better timed than yours to "welcome what we cannot shun," and I endeavour to follow it to my utmost, as I do all your moral lessons in sickness and in health, still praying

for the prosperity of my teacher. But since I wrote you last I have been sadly tost about; first a fever, which left me lame of one foot; and now I am but just able to limp about in the jaundice, in which situation I last night left Haddington to come here, where amid sickness, hurry, and confusion, the sight of green fields around me, your letter in my pocket, and the kindness of my young friends is a great comfort. Nor does your Muse ever spread her wing in vain for me. Still, I will hope some chance unseen by us may once more fix her eyrie near me, for I own I cannot unmoved resign *our* beadsman to Nithside. I am surprised and sorry you have not got Anthony's letter, which I am sure came safe to Edr., and I believe was accompany'd with a book. I am sure there was something along with it, but I fear my daughter Susie has been careless to whom they were sent. I wrote her that if they went to Wilson at Kilmarnock you would get them. It will be charity to write me, be it rhyme or reason, as the saying is, while I am thus confined. You see I can hardly hold the pen, but don't mention my illness; 'tis a secret I shall keep from my family at home for their happiness, as I am also assured there is no danger now. Direct to me at Morhame Mains, near Haddington, and should you finish your address to the man I at present envy most [Mr. Graham], do send it me. I cannot now point out all I admire in the things you sent me last. You are angry at the quantum of my luck-penny. Upon my soul so am I too, though for perhaps different causes. Adieu, dear sir, your sincerely obliged, obedient, humble sert. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) John Dunlop had now entered into possession of his new farm-house at Morham.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 16*th August* 1788.

I am in a fine disposition, my honored friend, to send you an elegaic epistle; and want only genius to make it quite Shenstonian.

> Why droops my heart with fancied woes forlorn?[1]
> Why sinks my soul beneath each wintry sky?

or, in the more homely poetry of the *Psalms of David in Metre*,

> Why art thou [then] cast down, my soul?
> What should discourage thee?

My increasing cares in this, as yet, strange country—gloomy conjectures in the dark vista of futurity—consciousness of my own inability for the struggle of the world—my broadened mark

to misfortune in a wife and children:—I could indulge these [reflections], nay, they press for indulgence, 'till my humour would ferment into the most acid vinegar of chagrin that would corrode the very thread of life.

To counterwork these baneful feelings, I have sat down to write to you; as I declare upon my soul I always find *that* the most sovereign balm under Heaven for my wounded spirit.

I was yesterday at Mr. Miller's[2] to dinner, [for] the first time since I had been his tenant. My reception was quite to my mind; from the lady of the house quite flattering. I believe in my conscience that she respects me more on account of my marrying a woman in circumstances somewhat similar to her own, when she commenced Mrs. Miller. See what it is to be rich! I was going to add, and to be great, but to be rich is to be great. She sometimes hits on a couplet or two, *impromptu*. She repeated one or two to the admiration of all present. My suffrage, as a professional man, was expected: I for once went agonising over the belly of my conscience. Pardon me, ye, my adored household gods, Independence of spirit and Integrity of soul! In the course of conversation, Johnson's *Musical Museum*, a collection of Scots songs with the music, was talked of. We got a song on the harpsichord, beginning "Raving winds around her blowing."[3] The air was much admired: the lady of the house asked me whose were the words: "mine, madam—they are indeed my very best verses": *sacré Dieu;* she took not the smallest notice of them! The old Scottish proverb says well, "King's caff is better than ither folk's corn." I was going to make a New Testament quotation about "casting pearls," but that would be too virulent, for the lady is actually a woman of sense and taste; a proof, if the subject needed, that these said two qualities, so useful and ornamental to human nature, are by no means inseparably of the family of Gules, Purpure, Argent, Or, etc.

After all that has been said on the other side of the question, man is by no means a happy creature. I do not speak of the selected few, favored by partial Heaven, whose souls are tuned to gladness amid riches and honours, and prudence and wisdom. I speak of the neglected many, whose nerves, whose sinews, whose days, whose thoughts, whose independence, whose peace, nay, whose very gratification and enjoyments are sacrificed and sold to these few bloated minions of fortune.

If I thought you had never seen it, I would transcribe for you a stanza of an old Scots ballad called *The life and age of man*,[4] beginning thus—

'Twas in the sixteenth hunder year
Of God and fifty-three,
Frae Christ was born, that bought us dear,
As writings testifie.

I had an old grand-uncle, with whom my mother lived a while in her girlish years; the good old man, for such he was, was long blind ere he died, during which time his most voluptuous enjoyment was to sit down and cry, while my mother would sing the simple old song of *The life and age of man.*

It is this way of thinking, it is these melancholy truths, that make religion so precious to the poor, miserable children of men. If it is a mere phantom existing only in the heated imagination of enthusiasm,

What truth on earth so precious as the lie?

My idle reasonings sometimes make me a little sceptical, but the necessities of my heart always give the cold philosophisings the lie. Who looks for the heart weaned from earth; the soul affianced to her God; the correspondence fixed with Heaven; the pious supplication and devout thanksgiving, constant as the vicissitudes of even and morn; who thinks to meet with these in the court, the palace, in the glare of public life? No: to find them in their precious importance and divine efficacy, we must search among the obscure recesses of disappointment, affliction, poverty, and distress.

I am sure, dear madam, you are now *more* than pleased with the *length* of my letters. I return to Ayrshire, middle of next week; and it quickens my pace to think that there will be a letter from you waiting me there. I must be here again very soon for my harvest. I am really afraid you will wish me to return to my post-sheet again. I have the honor to be most sincerely and gratefully, Madam, your humble servt., ROBT. BURNS.

(1) Free quotation of the commencement of Shenstone's Twentieth Elegy.

(2) At Dalswinton House.

(3) Burns's song with that title in the second volume of the *Museum.*

(4) *The Life and Age of Man* was a popular chap-book.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
at Moreham Mains, by Haddington.

MAUCHLINE, *21st August* 1788.

I came to Ayrshire yesternight, my much-esteemed friend, and found your very alarming letter waiting me. My father

used to say, that in his whole life, whatever he was fondly set on, almost always failed him. I am afraid it is all the heritage he has left me. Since my Ambition dared to hope for your correspondence and friendship, the enthusiasm of Attachment has grown on me, till the enjoyment of your friendship is entwisted with my very enjoyment of Life; and your last letter has given me a thousand terrors. I shall be here for ten days, and I conjure you to write me ever so short a scrap to inform me if you are getting rid of that ugly Distemper. To quit this disagreeable subject; the following is the first Compliment I have paid the Nith, and was the work of an hour as I jogged up his banks yesterday morning. The idea is a young gentleman perhaps going abroad. I do not affirm it has merit: the fact is, an author is by no means a competent judge of his own composition; at least till the heyday of Novelty evaporate.

The Thames flows proudly to the sea,
  Where royal cities stately stand;
But sweeter flows the Nith, to me,
  Where Cummins[1] ance had high command:
When shall I see that distant Land,
  That winding Stream I love sae dear!
Must cruel Fortune's adverse hand,
  For ever, ever keep me here!

Fair spread, O Nith, thy flowery dales,
  Where rove the flocks amang the broom;
And richly wave thy fruitful vales,
  Surrounded by the hawthorns' bloom:
Tho' wandering now must be my doom,
  Far from thy bony banks and braes;
There may my latest hours consume,
  With those my friends of early days!

You would know an Ayrshire lad, Sandy Bell, who made a Jamaica fortune, and died some time ago. A William Miller,[2] formerly a Mason, now a Merchant in this place, married a sister-german of Bell's for the sake of a £500 her brother had left her. A sister of Miller's, who was then Tenant of my heart for the time being, huffed my Bardship in the pride of her new connection; and I, in the heat of my resentment resolved to burlesque the whole business, and began as follows:—

THE MAUCHLINE WEDDING[3]

I

When Eighty-five was seven month auld,
  And wearing thro' the aught, . eighth
When rotting rains and Boreas bauld
  Gied farmer-folks a faught; gave, fight

Ae morning quondam Mason Will,
Now Merchant Master Miller,
Gaed down to meet wi' Nansie Bell — went
And her Jamaica siller, — money
To wed, that day.

2

The rising sun o'er Blacksideen[4]
Was just appearing fairly,
When Nell and Bess[5] get up to dress,
Seven lang half hours o'er early! — too
Now presses clink and drawers jink,
For linnens and for laces;
But modest Muses only *think*
What ladies' underdress is,
On sic a day. — such

3

But we'll suppose the stays are lac'd,
And bony bosom steekit; — hid
Tho', thro' the lawn—but guess the rest—
An Angel scarce durst keekit: — peeped
Then stockins fine, o' silken twine,
Wi' cany care are drawn up; — prudent
And garten'd tight whare mortal wight
. . . . . .

As I never wrote it down, my recollection does not entirely serve me.

4

But now the gown, wi' rustling sound,
Its silken[6] pomp displays;
Sure there's nae sin in being vain
O' siccan bony claes! — such
Sae jimp the waist, the tail sae vast—
Trouth, they were bony Birdies!
O Mither Eve, ye wad been grave
To see their ample hurdies — haunches
Sae large that day!!!

5

Then Sandy[7] wi's red jacket bra'
Comes, whip—jee—woa! about,
And in he gets the bony twa—
Lord send them safely out!
And auld John[8] Trot wi' sober phiz
As braid and bra's a Bailie, — fine
His shouthers and his Sunday's giz — wig
Wi' powther and wi' ulzie — oil
Weel smear'd that day.

Against my Muse had come thus far, Miss Bess and I were once more in unison, so I thought no more of the Piece. Tho'

the folks are rather uppish, they are such as I did not chuse to expose, so I think this is about the second time I ever scrawled it.

I wish these trifles may find you in a disposition to relish it.

Adieu! Heaven send you more exhilarating moments than I fear you at present enjoy! ROBT. BURNS.

(1) My landlord, Mr. Miller, is building a house by the banks of the Nith, just on the ruins of the Cummin's Castle.—R. B.

This is the first draft of the song "The Banks of Nith," which makes No. 295 of Johnson, vol. 3. Numerous alterations were made in the text before it was sent to Johnson.

(2) William Miller, a Mauchline friend of Burns.

(3) This squib was first published from this MS. in the *Centenary* edition, 1896.

(4) A hill.—R. B.

(5) Miller's two sisters.—R. B. Both were "Mauchline Belles."

(6) The ladies' first silk gowns, got for the occasion.—R. B.

(7) Driver of the post-chaise.—R. B.

(8) M——'s father.—R. B.

Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Mossgill,
near Mauchline.

MORHAM MAINS [*end of August* 1788].

Dr. Burns—I have had both your kind letters and you insist in so very obliging a manner to hear from me that, although I am ashamed to pick your pocket to fill King George's private purse, I cannot omit writing. To disappoint the expectations of a friend is always contrary to my principle, and on this occasion quite contrary to my inclination. There is in your correspondence a certain *je ne sais quoi* that secures you against the most overpowering insolence of your friends; at least I find it so. In short, yours are the letters of a poet, breathed from the heart of a Christian, and transcribed by the hand of a man who writes strong full text, and there is no mood in which I do not find them delightful, even when they are querulous and inconsistent—for instance when you come from *Cummin's Castle* in the sulks, and fall a-proving that sense and taste are not inseparable from family, because possest by a lady evidently of the family of Or or at least Argent by inoculation. I am glad for the sake of matrimony and my friend that when you wrote that letter you were far from Ayrshire and your wife; for indeed you have been as crusty as an old batchelor. Your ink is all gall, nor was it you, but poor Mrs. M. that should have used the sacred quotation of the swine, for they not only trod her pearls under foot but

turned and rent her. I wish I could see some confidential letter of yours where you speak of me and my impromptus, of which nobody ever heard or saw so many. But at least mine have never been praised where yours were neglected; so I shall stand free of envy, and, like many a one in the world, sleep safe in my insignificancy, and stand by you like a mole-hill at the foot of Traprain.[1] Indeed I began to fear your fire was gone out, and you were going to light up a new one of turpentine and the marine, and a very unodoriferous flame and dangerous to its neighbours, as I once experienced in attending a course of experiments in Natural Philosophy. The operator told us on mixing the three coldest liquids in the world there would arise a sudden flame, and we would be convinced of the propriety of this being his last experiment. Instantly a blaze of liquid fire pouring over the table on every side, accompanyed by the most suffocating exhalation, made every one run out of the room as fast as possible. Next day I had the honour to be where Lord Stair was long expected. At length he appeared, and apologized for his absence that, having only one silk vest and small cloths, he had been obliged to wait till my lady had darned the holes burnt in them at yesterday's exhibition. Now, I should be more afraid still of the caustic of your double-distilled vinegar should it come across me at any time. However, you may allege I have not been shy of provoking it at present, but I trust 'tis already mollified by the sweet smiles of innocence and the endearments of love, amidst which you are now placed; and besides, my sickness claims compassion. Meanwhile, I beg you don't change your paper, unless it be to get double foolscap,[2] for I should rejoice your sheet were as large as a winnow-cloth. But to my health.

So pleased with your pen,
Of your friendship so vain,
Not toothache nor jaundice
Shall make me complain.

Yet I will not allow you to call it an ugly distemper. Remember, Madam Pompadour says, "A woman's last sigh is more for her looks than her life." Besides, yellow is the royal colour in China, where it is the most envied distinction to be allowed to wear it. 'Tis the beauty of the topaz and the glory of the Sienna marble, the most esteemed and costly modern decoration; so that, should I die here, I would make an inimitable fine statue for the farmyard at Morhame Mains; spite of which I endeavour to recover the original tint at the expense of tarter emetic every other day, and as yet without much success. My gown, instead of buttoning

as before, pins over a handbreadth, but I am not very bad, since you see I can laugh both at my own distress and that of my friends. And if you can allow your poetical fancy to represent a sick lady living on white wine and sour milk, and walking from six to ten or twelve miles every day, as I really do, you will not find me an object of great compassion. Indeed the malady does not prey upon my mind; so I esteem it a very great trifle. It was far otherwise when the fever was coming on, and I wrot you in the mournful mood, as I suppose by your reply; for indeed I recollect nothing of what I said then. It will put me half in the vapours again when I consider your next must be far from Ayrshire, in the nest of my foes. The Menteiths only betrayed Wallace's life; the Cummins [3] murthered his fame, and I hate their very remembrance. Nor can I endure you should call yourself the Bard of the Nith. I even read with regret the wish, though offered under another character, of ending one's days on those distant banks, did not the next line show you thought upon Auld Hermit Ayr at the moment fancy threw those numbers into rhyme. I would have sent you some Lothian lines my butter-milk had cast up, but the paper will not hold them, and they are not worth paying still more for. I wish you may not have a third couple befor our little one arrive. Farewell! I won't write you again till Willie Kerr comes home, and Lord knows where he is, however, or when he will return. I am vext to think I have not the least chance of being at home till after you must be long gone. I think in all human probability we shall never meet more. That is my fate, I think, with all my friends, and nobody is worse of making new ones. Yet hitherto every tenant of my heart, short or long, seems to have sat on a liferent lease—I mean my friends; ladies don't tell about their loves. I hope you have the promise of a good crop. I wish you be attentive enough for a farmer. My son has never been one night from his own house since he carried home his wife, and he says he finds his affairs require all that and more, were it possible for him to give it. May Providence guide your paths, and crown them with health, wealth, and prosperity, is the wish of, Dr. Sir, your obliged friend and humble sert. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) A conspicuous conical hill in Prestonkirk parish, East Lothian.

(2) Burns's last letter was written on foolscap—all previous ones having been on post.

(3) Dalswinton, the property of Burns's landlord, formerly

belonged to the family of the Comyns, lords of Badenoch (see *antea*, p. 88). Wallace was betrayed to the English by Sir John Menteith. The Comyn whom Bruce slew for alleged treachery is charged with betraying Wallace and the cause of independence at the battle of Falkirk (1298), by deserting the patriot chief, along with other Norman-Scotch nobles, at a critical moment.

A letter which Burns wrote to Mrs. Dunlop between that last printed and that which follows is missing. In it he must have transcribed the full text of the "First Epistle to Robert Graham, Esq., of Fintry," of which he had sent her the "first crude thoughts" only in his letter of 2nd August. In her next Mrs. Dunlop criticises the "Epistle" in detail. This and the following letters were addressed by Kerr of the Post-Office to care of Burns's friend John M'Murdo, who soon after this date appears in the poet's correspondence as Chamberlain to the Duke of Queensberry at Drumlanrig, but must have been resident at this period at Carse, in some capacity or other. Scott Douglas says M'Murdo was introduced to Burns by Captain Riddel of Friar's Carse.

Ad. Mr. Robt. Burns, at Ellisland,
care of Mr. John M'Murdo, Carse,
Dunscore, by Dumfries.

Morhame Mains, *12th Sept.* 1788.
[Franked by Kerr].

Dr. Burns—I never received a compliment my heart more sweetly relished than when you tell me you found writing me a relief to that corroding gloom which sometimes obscures the brightest minds, and makes those most unhappy who deserve least to be so. As Rousseau says, "Have I not known George Keith, and shall I complain of fate?" Shall I for a moment be enabled to reflect that the man whose works have soothed the darkest moments of my soul has told me that in writing to me his cast off one cloud, and got nearer that serenity with which one naturally wishes genius ever blest, and to which I would pray you might never be a stranger, were it not that a variety of sensations is, I doubt, necessary to preserve the genuine character of both the man and the muse. I think Scripture says it is good for us to be afflicted. Experience tells me it has oft been good for me, and I remember, before I knew you, I suspected prosperity might hurt you, and, if you remember, told you so in the first lines I ventured

to address to you. Since, I own, I have not believed a harsh regimen so needful for your temperament, and were providence to entrust me with the administration of things, should hardly confine you to it so oft as perhaps adverse fortune may do, since I really esteem you so much as to believe indulgence would not make a spoilt child of you, and, whatever you may think, I assure you I think this is the very pinnacle of greatness in man, and far o'er-matching the boast of fortitude in misfortune. Yet I wish you had a little more of a sanguine disposition, and did not imagine every cloud portended a storm, or every thunder-storm a bad harvest. Yet, did not these chimeras come across you, they could not be dissipated by sitting down to write me, and so I had lost one of the sweetest ideas of my life, one that I could not purchase with any price, and for which gold could give me no equivalent. I incline to exclaim like Rousseau—has not my correspondence once proved comfortable to Burns, and shall I ever again be tempted to think I have lived in vain, or say, why was my thread spun out to 58 years? As to my health, I must tell you I have drank two pounds of hemp seed boiled in small beer, and am greatly better; so you see I am not so crabbed as when I wrot last, and abused you so grossly that I expected you were to lampoon me instead of giving me so good-humour'd a reply, in which, however, I am not wholly sure you have followed nature. I daresay you had a little resentment, and thought at least a lady ought to have kept within the bounds of good breeding; and so I certainly would had I not been convinced it was sometimes better for both my friend and myself to be laught at than to be tret seriously when we are seized with poetical-tragi-comic forebodings. Now, before I criticise your poetry, I must tell you a secret, but don't breathe it to the air as yet. I have had one of my wishes granted since you heard from me last; yet "the Gods have in some measure curst Pamela with her prayers." I have a daughter[1] married, but married to a native of a foreign land, possibly lost to me forever, and a match which is just a cast of the die whether 'tis a great one or one that will not afford bread. The man I never saw. He cannot speak my tongue, nor I his; yet he is well spoke of; they are fond of each other, and I trust in my God shall be happy, when I shall be permitted to view them from a superiour situation, after I have bid adieu to all this mortal coil, and am placed where I hope it will make a part of my bliss to behold or perhaps superintend that of my children and my friends. Perhaps, Burns, I may sometimes be employed as your Coila or guardian angel. How would you like to have the tables

so turned upon you, and be reduced to write under my poor inspiration? I fear you would once more repeat "My pen I here fling to the door," but I leave myself no room to give you my sentiments on your verses, far less to send you mine, as I promised in my last, since this must be only a single, and even then a sixpenny letter. But I hope Kerr will be returned against I write you again, and then I shall scribble more at my ease and less to your loss, as I may then do it gratis.

I hope and believe your lines must please the man to whom they are addrest, and although in some degree a parody of Pope, there is great variety of finely fancied epithets thrown through the whole, and sufficient novelty to attract a man of taste; the *lead* and *buoy* are well hung on, and though I would have wished you less hard on the poor knights and squires, I admire much the *flowing phosphorus* and *lumpish dough* and *unyielding mass*, and most of all the *flashing Aurora Borealis*. Then the materials, creation, and character of the poet, are all in my opinion well conducted; honest Nature's compunction and twisting the woodbine round the *generous truly great* is a strong, nervous, elegantly-turned compliment, which must dart through a sensible soul worthy of the noble praise it conveys. The first and last couplets of the next sentence I think peculiarly beautiful, and the *hardwrung boon* feelingly expressive. As for your ideas of the goodness of the poetic heart, I think my own were in unison when I found in

> That breast where genius flamed refin'd,
> The lighthouse steer'd for by our storm-beat kind.

The contrast that follows is striking to every mind a little deficient in the treasure of worldly wisdom, and finely illustrated by Moore in his story of Mr. B. I daresay too most of us, like him, have found our most valued friends in this class. At least I am sure I should never covet any of the rudely-etched medals on base metal, those vile caricatures of the Supreme Being. As to the next lines, my very soul would thrill with envy in reading them, were they not addrest to the Graham, a name which every Wallace to the end of the world ought to revere. May Fintry feel and deserve the warm address *Friend of my Life*, etc. etc. I could not wish him a warmer blessing were he the great Sir John [Wallace] himself. To the end all I can say of it is to repeat your own words of Anton's [2] picture, "Tis yourself, the very soul of the man"—that soul which I could never have investigate with half the delight I have done had it never more the horny fist and piebald jacket which first attracted my curiosity, and still convinces

me of all the superiority it required to shine through such an uncouth disguise. Apropos to disguise, this jaundice has made my skin so yellow and thick and uncouth that I always remind myself of Dryden's tale of Guiseard in his leathern frock. But I must not dismiss your verses without remarking that I am not pleased with the word *WHERE* beginning the last line but one, and would wish you to substitute in its place either *With* or *There*, as with either of these the sentence would conclude which to me at present seems imperfect, and leaves you in expectation of something yet to follow between and *Finis*. But perhaps this is only some confusion of grammar in my brain, instead of a fault in your arrangement of words, where interesting ideas might in some degree jostle them out of their place in your head and consequently in your poem. My young landlady will still, I think, go about all the harvest, which with us is not unfavourable; so I shall end with Cunningham the Stewarton robber's conclusion to his father, when he acquainted him he was next day to be hanged—"hoping these few lines will find you in the same condition"—I mean as to the harvest not the hanging. Now, pray tell me where you are to go at the end of three weeks, as my letters are too precious ventures to be set adrift at random, and if I knew a kinder farewell than a Roman one, I would try to find room for it. What do you think of a Scots "God bless you and your friends," among which FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) This must have been Mrs. Dunlop's second daughter, Susan, who married James Henri of Bernaldean. The marriage has hitherto been dated in 1789, but this letter fixes the date for certain in 1788.

(2) A pet name for Anthony Dunlop.

Burns has used the back of this letter for a jotting.

Fields	1st	51 thraves
,,	2	75 thraves
Mosshill		54 Do.
Stookhill		110 Do.
Above bar		44 Do.
Corner		17 Do.
Croft		55 Do.
Houseback		79 Do.
Holmhead		60 Do.

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To Mrs. Dunlop.

Mauchline, 27*th Sept.* 1788.

I have received twins, Dear Madam, more than once, but scarcely ever with more pleasure than when I received yours of the 12th inst. To make myself understood: I had wrote to Mr. Graham, inclosing my Poem addressed to him, and the same post which favoured me with yours, brought me an answer from him. It was dated the very day he received mine; and I am quite at a loss to say whether it was most polite or kind.

Your Criticisms, my honored Benefactress, are truly the work of a friend. They are not the blasting depredations of a canker-toothed, caterpillar critic; nor are they the fair statement of cold impartiality, balancing with unfeeling exactitude the *pro* and *con* of an Author's merits; they are the judicious observations of animated Friendship, selecting the beauties of the Piece.

I have just arrived from Nithsdale, and will be here a fortnight. I was on horseback this morning (for between my wife and my farm is just 46 miles) by three o'clock. As I jogged along in the dark, I was taken with a Poetic-fit as follows—

Mrs. Fergusson of Craigdarroch's Lamentation for the Death of her Son[1]

An uncommonly promising youth of eighteen or nineteen years of age

Fate gave the word, the arrow sped
And pierced my Darling's heart,
And with him all the joys are fled
Life can to me impart!

By cruel hands the Sapling drops,
In dust dishonored laid:
So fell the pride of all my hopes,
My age's future shade.

The mother-linnet in the brake
Bewails her ravished young;
So I, for my lost Darling's sake,
Lament the liveday long.

Death, oft I've fear'd thy fatal blow,
Now, fond, I bare my breast;
Oh, do thou kindly lay me low
With him I love, at rest!

You will not send me your Poetic-rambles, but, you see, I am no niggard of mine. I am sure your Impromptus give me double pleasure: what falls from your Pen can neither be unentertaining in itself, nor indifferent to me.

The one fault you found, is just ; but I cannot please myself in an emendation.

What a life of solitude is the life of a Parent ! You interested me much in your young Couple. I suppose it is not any of the ladies I have seen.

I would not take my folio for this epistle, and now I repent it. I am so jaded with my dirty long journey that I was afraid to drawl into the essence of dulness with any thing larger than a quarto, and so I must leave out another rhyme of this morning's manufacture.

I'll pay the sapientipotent George most chearfully to hear from you ere I leave Ayrshire.—I have the honor to be, Dear Madam, your much obliged, and most respectful, humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) James Fergusson, Esq., younger of Craigdarroch, son of the victor in the contest for the Maxwelton Whistle ; the youth died on 19th November 1787. This "Lamentation" was sent also to another patroness of the poet, Mrs. General Alexander Stewart of Afton, on the death of her only son, Alexander Gordon Stewart, who died, aged sixteen, at a military academy at Strasburg, on 5th December 1787.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, at Ellisland,
care of Mr. John M'Murdo, Carse,
Dunscore, Dumfries.

MORHAME MAINS, *1st Oct.* 1788.
[Franked by Kerr.]

Dr. Sir — The three weeks you mentioned being at home[1] are past, and I fear I may miss the mark in writing you now, as you told me the same address would only answer that time. Yet, as ill luck has oft thwarted me before now, I will for once hope good chance may befriend me, and have kept you longer than you intended to catch this flying sheet, which sets out on a random search as soon as I heard Kerr was returned. If ever I keep a register of time, I shall surely mark the month of August with a white stone. Indeed it has been the most eventful of my life ; but not for that do I note it at present, but that on that memorable month are dated four of your letters—a happiness in which I shall I hope hereafter rejoice to see poor August have rivals. 'Twas in that blessed month you told me you found writing to me the best salve for an wounded spirit. The poor Levite [*sic*] who lay wounded on the roadside was not more solaced by the wine and oil of the Samaritan than my spirit was by reading that line

in your letter; for I had the vanity to take it for a literal fact. I have thought Sept. of a dreary length since you have been silent. Yet I ought to please myself that your spirit has during that space felt hale and hearty, since you had not recourse to the cordial of whose efficacy I feel more proud than the Queen ought to do of her throne. Indeed, it must be confessed I have much more cause. The sovereign ambition of my soul from my earliest remembrance has been to share and soothe the affliction of those I esteemed and liked, but the very superlative delight one can figure to themselves in my opinion must be in fancying to ourselves that those we even *admire* voluntarily fly to an intercourse with us, in the confidential trust that it will prove consolatory. Now, this is the only hope that never deceives us. No one ever sat down to write in this faith but what found it could really remove *mountains* of woe. How oft in writing you disjointed scraps of prose and verse have I felt, as it were, the very heart change within me.

> And as dark shades fly o'er th' uneven ground,
> Black clouds grow lighter in their airy round.

But whilst I experienced this relief in being allowed to address the first poet of my age or country, in pouring forth the effusions of the moment before the gentlest sensibility that ever displayed itself in the flowing harmony of verse, never did I dare harbour an idea that the person to whom I looked up aloft from the lowest base of the hill would stoop from the summits of Parnassus, from the holy heights of inspiration, to squander that ink upon me which half the world were gaping for. Nor could I have hoped that, when my eyes would no longer serve me to pick a thorn from your finger without spectacles, you should be able to discover anything in my character to draw a sting from your mind, or help to sweeten the bitter cup of human care. I'm sure if ever in any moment or manner my being in this world has contributed to make you easier, I cannot express how much your telling me so has made me happier.

Dear Burns, will you allow me to ask, is "Each pleasure riches give"[2] a proper English expression? Were it not yours, I should not think it was perfectly correct, but would rather have approv'd "Each pleasure wealth can give" as more grammatic and melodious too. Since you asked my opinion, I should be angry at myself if there were a comma I disliked, or rather that I feared any one else could dislike, that I did not point out to your notice the moment it struck my own. Perhaps you will be angry at me for doing this; 'tis the weakness of great men to fret at

people who find trifling faults in them or their works. I think you are above this with a friend, but I may be mistaken. If I am, I hope it is only in my grammar, not in my *friend*. There I would have my judgment fixed and unalterable as the laws of the Medes and Persians, for it is there alone I am sure it could not change, but for the worse. Meantime, I only criticise the line, not the sentiment. I must tell you a little incident in confirmation of the parts the world allow you for relishing the sweets of affluence. One day your works were the subject of discourse. I had not then seen so many proofs that the author's taste soar'd above these pleasures gold can buy, and, all curiosity, asked if any of the company knew or had ever seen him. "Yes," says one gentleman, "I was once accidentally two days with him." "And," cries I, "what kind of man is he in company? What did you think of him?" "I don't know," says he, "what he might have been once, but they have quite spoilt him now at Edr. If ever he was good for anything, he is the damnedest bundle of self-conceit and insolence I ever saw." "Insolence," says I, surprised; "for self-conceit I can readily forgive that, for surely he has an infinite deal to found it on; but for God's sake tell me how did he show it? What did he say or do?" "Why, he talked loud and more than came to his share. In the morning could not breakfast without confections; at dinner found nothing good enough for him, nothing but what was detestable, curst the cook, damn'd the waiters, and despised drinking port." "He had been drunk with port the night before, and ree or cropsick in the morning." "No," says he, "'twas all airs; he was quite vife, and ate a very hearty dinner." You'll allow this was a strong sketch. Had Beugo hit it off no better, I don't think I should have discovered the original by the picture, as I really had done not long before. Indeed, I could not resist rejoining, and I dare say in a manner expressive of the self-applause I really felt at the moment, "He must have had great esteem for the company I saw him in, for his behaviour was the very reverse of all that, and seemed perfectly natural and easie too." But I have forgot myself, and lost sight of the rich pleasures we set out with. Now, I own I have, I think, felt sometimes a zest in mediocrity which riches would have excluded, and I dare say so have you. Even at this moment, while I write, are you not conscious that, if you possest a coronet and a nabob fortune, you would be less sensible that my letters were real testimonies of the internal treasures Providence has given you in lieu of them? Or, were I able to serve you as I could wish, might my happiness even in

that not be counterbalanced by a diminution of my present satisfaction in that disinterested goodwill which I am proud to believe you bear me? Yet I must confess, if Mr. Graham make a proper use of his advantages, I will envy him spite of all philosophizing to the contrary.

I wrot the above two days ago. Since that I have been very busy—shall I tell you how? Yes, I will, that you may see there is no *sanctum sanctorum* in my mind (so void it is now) at which a friend may not peep, even although that very friend must remember how lately he turned the dark lanthorn upon me when his whole soul was on flame, and he hid every circumstance from me as if I had been the worst enemy he had in the world. This was a thunder-clap I can never forget, for at that instant I was just pluming myself in the superiour share I had gained of your esteem and confidence. But to my employment and motive for it—a secret which on trial I almost find incommunicable. I have a gown which was a present from my only brother. For this and forty other reasons, which you can never guess, I have had it this forty years, and wore it at least ten of that time; it was perfectly in tatters. Four days ago *quand je reçoivoit un lettre de mon gendre inconnu*, 'twas now necessary to have a new one. I sit down to write for it, but just then got an account of the most clamant misery of a poor woman whom fate had persecuted past redemption, and whose last hope was snatched from her in a moment by the unlooked-for expiring of the only son from whom she looked for help, in her arms alone and in despair. These are the moments when gold is valuable. I threw my letter in the fire, gave ten shillings for a body to my old gown instead of sending for the new one, saved the tailor's bill, and sit down to sew it myself with a pleasure which even superseded that of writing you, and which I would not have felt could I have readily commanded £20 at the time in ready money without borrowing —a thing I dare never trust myself to do, for I am so miserable an economist I should never be able to make up my leeway again if I did, and neither my pride nor principle admit of being in debt.

Will you be so good as tell me whose marks the different letters are in Johnson's *Museum*, which I have just got the second volume of?[3] Besides a number of stars and one differently shaped from all the rest, there are D., M., X., Z., R. and B., all or any of whom I would be glad to have named, if 'tis not a secret you are unwilling to communicate to myself; for if you forbid me I would not mention it to anybody else. I hope you are not again in Ayrshire, and I at so great a distance still. My patience is

wore out on that and several other accounts, but I believe it is predestinate you and I are never to meet more. Should it even prove so, I flatter myself our minds will frequently agree even at distance, and that we may both have pleasure in comparing and communicating our ideas to each other upon paper, if not in company. Meantime, I shall be impatient to hear whether you have been at Mr. Graham's or at Mossgiel. If the first, what were the consequences of your visit? Write me here still, for God knows when I leave this. I would complain of my long confinement were it rational to think of myself, when I consider what must be the situation of the poor girl I am with, and see with what inimitable good humour she submits to what she cannot but anxiously feel. She is a most enormous bulk indeed, and I am sure must be a very great burthen to herself, yet she never breathes a complaint. God send her safely through a state which has for some time given me very uneasie apprehensions on her account! Besides, I really think losing his wife would be ruin to John at present. I think their life is almost the only one I ever could have coveted, and in my youngest days I believe I would have found it replete with everything which would then have been requisite to make me happy, could I have divested myself of some part of the liking I have to books and the predilection in favour of those who write, or at least like to read them, which I dare say it is as good for them that they enjoy in a more moderate degree, so as not to interfere with the farm, as I fear it may sometimes do with you. But it is no matter, since, as poor Mess John Hunter[4] says in one of his poetic pannels in the church wall at Ayr, speaking of charity—

> Water whereon this seed is cast may yield
> A crop more plenteous than the richest field.

I hope you may forgive my quotation, if it requires any apology from the expectation of being able to realise the prediction, as I have no doubt if you could labour equally to the advantage of your family, there is no ground you could improve with such ease and pleasure to yourself as the precincts of Parnassus. I am sure there is none where I would like so well to walk round your policy.

It is this moment come into my head that as the time of the address is elapsed, you may never get this scrawl, in which case it is already too long. Perhaps you may think so, at any rate, if the weather be still bad, and the corn wet in the field, or some such rural distress putting you out of tune with yourself and of course with me, unless you resemble me in one particular, which

is that of being most pleased with what you write when I am displeased and unhappy with everything else, for really the use of the poet is not most materially to divert his graver friends. That his ludicrous pieces can do to great purpose, as I experienced at the early dressing-room ["The Mauchline Wedding"] I was lately introduced to, but the serious sublime ones bring serenity and unclouded sunshine to anguish, and even to peevish discontent—the most troublesome state of female minds, and from which they have few recourses and their friends no shelter but what they often find in contempt or indifference Nay, more, a friendly kind letter can convey this cordial more effectually than all the poignancy of wit or melody of numbers put together for the public. In nothing is *meum* and *tuum* more distinguishable than in the difference one feels between reading the same thing and from the same person in a book or in a letter. Believe me, I prefer one of yours by post to the whole Alexandrian Library, even could I get it in English. Adieu! Health and happiness to you and yours, and may you always wish and find me your friend! FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) This is a reference to the missing letter to which Mrs. Dunlop's of the 12th September was an answer.

(2) From the "First Epistle to Robert Graham, Esq., of Fintray." Mrs. Dunlop's suggestion was not adopted.

(3) This fixes the date of publication of the second volume of Johnson's *Museum*.

(4) "D'rymple Mild's" predecessor in the first charge of Ayr parish. He was the author of, among other works, a religious drama, "The Wanderer and Traveller."

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS,
Mossgill, Kilmarnock.

MORHAME MAINS, *9th Octbr.* 1788.
[Franked by Kerr.]

Dr. Burns—I have been very much out of luck. The very day I heard Mr. Kerr was come home I sit down to write you, and although the time was elapsed you had pointed out for finding you at Ellisland, I flattered myself some lucky accident might have retarded your journey. In short I wished to write, not that I had anything to say, but that I hoped to tempt you to say something to me, and as you had left me quite in the dark as to where you were going, and I was very unwilling to think it would be again to Ayrshire, just while I was so far from it, I thought I would venture a sheet to Nithsdale. I did not the evening, and, as cross luck would have it, the very next morning after I dis-

patched my letter, which was not till two days after I should have done it, came yours of the twenty-seventh from Mauchline. Mine, I hope, will lay safe till you go home again, but you need be no ways anxious about it, as it is all a prosaic piece, and too frozen already to catch cold in keeping. I am so much obliged by your writing on your arrival, and sending me half the product of your morning's work, that I dare not reproach your little scrimpet page, though the more I was pleased with having it, the more I must wish you had held by the former size. Yet it would have been quite inconscionable to wish your fatiguing yourself, just lighted from a 46 miles' dark ride, and getting into so large a circle, from whom it was almost unfair to steal the precious moments of meeting to give me your Lament, tho' indeed you would hardly have done justice to the share I take in what tends to your happiness, had you delayed telling me of the twin-letter, from which I dare say you can hardly reap more pleasure than I do. Fortune honoured and favour'd mine much by bringing it in good company, and hereafter I shall be glad you never find cause to separate the ideas of a friend who really may and does materially serve, and one who can only wish sincerely to see another do what is beyond her own reach to perform. You say I send you none of my poetic rambles. The truth is the instrument is jogged out of tune of late, as you say, by parental solicitudes, but if you'll not be pleased but with a rhyme I must try two three lines like the wife in the song—what soe'er they be, if they jingle, that's enough for me.

> Tane up between a priest and Jean,
> You once forgot Parnassus Queen;
> From you to me the Muse then fled,
> With you still running in her head.
>
> . . . . .

Now I aver this is a very pretty compliment, if you can find it out, and quite fit to come from the *Aurora of the poles*, but I am too long at telling you what a grand subject I was within a hair's-breadth of furnishing your mourning Melpomene. Nay, all the tears of the Muses would have been too few. My very soul shudders at the thought, even now when the danger is past. You say you are interested in the young couple (whose secret I therefore hope you still have and will keep till you have it from some other quarter), but figure to yourself Lady Wallace's[1] house burnt, which has been twice in the most imminent danger within this six weeks, and suppose the Swiss coming post to see the unextinguishable flame that has actually reduced to ashes the

house next his bride's. Suppose you found Mossgiel all in one conflagration on your arrival, and the distant flame lighted your darksome way for some miles before you could reach it. You may then pen something that would have suited such a catastrophe. Yet I know not. You would still [have] had friends and acquaintances. How bitter must be misfortune to a stranger in a strange land! But this picture is too dreadful to dwell upon; it has made me sick two days already; so I bid it adieu, and will now send you some lines I wrot some time ago on being told a Mr. Anderson had just bought Clerkenton in this neighbourhood, and was about to marry a sweet pretty girl, a Miss Finlay, born at Donmanore near Edr., and living in Haddington with a grandmother. She is a distant relation of mine, and came to see me herself, and some circumstances in which I believe Fame was mistaken, as well as in that of its being her betrothed that had bought Clerkenton, interested me and produced the inclosed. Here I was called to see my son Andrew come to town on the news of the fire, which has been more alarming than they let me know—so very near my friends that L. W. was taken out of a window, not daring open the door lest the mob had rushed in and robbed the house, which on this account my daughter would not leave as long as it was possible to stay with safety. Yet the effort has been so much for her she has been confined to bed ever since, and so ill her brother and sister were called in from the country to see her—all which they kept quiet from me, as I could not have left John's wife, whose situation is still undetermined, and who seems to place so much on having me with her that I could not on any account tear myself away, unless she had been rich enough to have some other friend among the numerous relations living all around her who might have supply'd my place. Be not therefore surprized my hand shakes; so does my heart; yet my health is now pretty good, and I am much interested to hear what harvest and crop you have had this season, and how you left and found your far distant concerns. Remember I told you the Muse that inspired my rhymes was the wish to please a poet and to gain a friend, and that my aim was to pry into every cranny and corner of that soul which prompted your delightfull lays. I have done everything in my power to attain that end; if you think me worth the trouble, shew me the house, instead of turning the dark side of the lanthorn on my friendly curiosity. Farewell. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) When James Boswell went to London the dowager

Lady Wallace became the occupier of his flat in James's Court, where he in his turn had succeeded David Hume.

To BURNS.

MORHAM MAINS, *Tuesday 21st Oct.* 1788.

Dear Sir—In consequence of the promise your friendship excited, I am to inform you that this has been a great week with me. It has brought me a son and a grandson. On Wednesday last, Mr. Henry, the Swiss mountaineer, arrived from London, where he had been in a fever, and found his wife, thank God! just got out of the same condition, in which she had continued ever since the fire. I have not yet seen either of them, being wholly taken up about the young stranger and his mother, whom I now hope soon to be able to leave well and nursing her little charge. She was really ill, and I think the farmer's joy in the increase of his family was hugely diminished by his concern about and fears for his little wife. I would beg to hear from you as soon as you receive this, that I may guess whether I can have any chance of finding you in Ayrshire at my return, which I think ought not now to be a far distant prospect. It is not mere words of course to say I will meet my friends with redoubled pleasure if you are one of the number. On the contrary, I am not sure if even the power of your own magic numbers can express the strength and sincerity of that regard and admiration which attaches me to my favourite author, and inspires the pleasure and pride I feel in having your own sanction to assume the name of, Dr. Burns, your friend and obliged humble sert. Believe me, 'tis one of the greatest satisfactions I can feel to think you have a little partiality in favour of the truly grateful

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Write me here till I give you another address. I have not time for a word more. You who increase like the patriarch Jacob will despise our poor single, long-looked-for production. Lord bless you and your wife, your sons and daughters, your man and your maid servant, your ox and your ass, and all that is yours! Amen.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Moreham Mains, Haddington.

SANQUHAR, *23rd Oct.* 1788.

Dear Madam—This is literally a letter *en passant*, for I write you while my horse baits, on my wonted journey. Your two kind epistles came in course; but I shall much long for a third one, to inform me how you have recovered the horrid shock you must have

felt in the dreadful catastrophe of Lady Wallace's house. My blood runs cold when I think of it!

Apropos, I breakfasted this morning at Laicht, near New Cumnock, and Mrs. Logan[1] asked me if I had heard that Miss S——n D——p was married to a Dane? I replied, the information was new to me. As it is written, "that which is done in corners shall be proclaimed on the house-tops." Your last, Madam, is unanswerable. The illustrious name of Wallace and the accomplishments of Mrs. Dunlop have accustomed you so much to the superlatives of Commendation that I am afraid.

ELLISLAND, *26th Oct.*

My officious Landlady interrupted me, Madam, as I was going on to tell you that my Modesty called out Murder! all the time I was reading your last. Very unlike the fate of your other letters, I have never read it but once. Though I never sit down to *answer* a letter, as our Pastoral Bards make their contending swains answer one another, or as a be-periwigged Edinr. Advocate answers his be-gowned brother, yet I cannot help thanking you particularly for the poetic compliment in your epistle the last I received but one. Now I talk of Poetry, what think you of the following character[2]: I mean the painting of it:—

A little, upright, pert, tart, tripping Wight,
And still his precious Self his vast delight:
Who loves his own smart Shadow in the streets
Better than e'er the fairest She he meets.
A *man of fashion* too, he made his tour,
Learn'd, vive la bagatelle, et, vive l'amour;
So travell'd monkies their grimace improve,
Polish their grin, nay sigh for ladies' love.
Much specious lore, but little understood;
Fineering oft outshines the solid wood:
His solid sense by inches you must tell,
But mete his subtle cunning by the ell;
His meddling Vanity, a busy fiend,
Still making work his selfish craft must mend.

Another[2]—

. . . Crochallan came,
The old cock'd hat, the brown surtout the same:
His rising beard just bristling in his might,
('Twas five long nights and days to shaving-night)
His grisly, uncomb'd hair, wild-staring, thatch'd
A head, for thought profound and clear, unmatch'd:
Yet, tho' his caustic wit was biting rude,
His heart was warm, benevolent and good.

These are embryotic parts of what may, perhaps, one day be a POEM.

In Johnson's Scots *Musical Museum*, you will find my pieces, such as they are—for Heaven knows they are many of them dull enough!—signed with one or other of the letters R., B., or X. The other marked pieces are by poetic folks whom I dare say, except Dr. Blacklock, you don't know.

I may see you at Moreham mains, if you do not leave it for two or three months; as a little business of the devil's making will sometime soon, drive me to Haddington. Or if you return to Dunlop to keep your Hallowe'en, I will meet you there also; as I must be at Dunlop and Kilmaurs' cow-fairs, which happen on Hallowe'en and Hallowday—old style. I believe I shall move, bag and baggage, to Nithsdale at Martinmas. I am getting the loan of a neighbouring house, till my own be ready.

Before this can reach you, my direction will be again at Mauchline.—I have the honour to be, with the highest respect, Dear Madam, your oblidged and obedient humble servt.

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) Mrs. Logan of Laicht, on the banks of the Afton in the parish of New Cumnock. She brought Laicht to her husband at marriage, and they resided there, and not at Mr. Logan's patrimonial estate of Knockshinnoch in the same parish. Mr. Logan was the "Afton's Laird" of "The Kirk's Alarm."

(2) These are the first drafts of the lines on Creech and Smellie respectively, which were afterwards incorporated, with emendations, in "The Poet's Progress."

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Moreham Mains, Haddington.

MAUCHLINE, 29*th Oct.* 1788.

I give you joy, Dear Madam, of your new grand-child. I beg you will give my sincere compliments to my brother farmer on the occasion.

I wrote you the other day from Nithsdale, but I write you whenever I have leisure; and lest I should grow tiresome with my Egotisms and rhymes, just let the reading of them wait till you too have leisure. I began a Work lately, but what that work may be I am totally ignorant. As Young says, "'Tis nonsense destin'd to be future sense." I sent you a fragment of it by my last: take the following rough sketch of the intended beginning, and let me know your opinion of the lines:—

THE POET'S PROGRESS [1]

AN EMBRYOTIC POEM IN THE WOMB OF FUTURITY

Thou, Nature, partial Nature, I arraign,
Of thy caprice maternal I complain.
The peopled fold thy kindly care have found,
The horned bull tremendous spurns the ground:
The lordly lion has enough, and more,
The forest trembles at his very roar.
Thou givest the ass his hide, the snail his shell,
The poisonous wasp victorious guards his cell.
Thy minion Man, exulting in his powers,
In fields, courts, camps, by altars, bars devours.
Kings bear the civil, Priests the sacred blade;
Soldiers and hangmen murder by their trade:
Even silly Women have defensive arts,
Their eyes, their tongues, and nameless other parts.

But O thou cruel Stepmother and hard,
To that poor, fenceless, naked thing—a BARD!
A thing unteachable in worldly skill,
And half an idiot too, more helpless still.
No heels to bear him from the opening dun;
No claws to dig, his hated sight to shun:
No horns, but those by luckless Hymen worn,
And those, alas! not Amalthea's horn.
His dart satyric, his unheeded sting;
And idle fancy's pinion all his wing:
The silly sheep that wanders, wild, astray,
Not more unfriended, and not more a prey.
Vampyre Booksellers drain him to the heart,
And butcher Critics cut him up by art.

Critics, appall'd I venture on the Name;
Those bandits that infest the paths of Fame:
Bloody Dissectors, worse than ten Monroes;
He cuts to teach, they mangle to expose.
His heart by causeless, wanton Malice wrung;
By Blockheads daring even to madness stung;
Torn, bleeding, tortur'd in th' unequal strife,
The hapless Poet flounces on thro' life:
Till fled each Muse that glorious once inspir'd,
Extinct each ray that once his bosom fir'd;
Low-sunk in feeble, unprotected age,
Dead even resentments for his injur'd Page;
He feels no more the ruthless Critic's rage!

So, by some hedge, the generous Steed deceas'd,
To half-starv'd, snarling Curs a dainty feast;
By Toil and Famine wore to skin and bone,
Lies, senseless of each tugging bitch's son.

Thus far only have I proceeded, and perhaps I may never again resume the subject. I must mention one caution to you,

Madam, with respect to these verses; I have a remote idea that I may one day use them as instruments of vengeance, and consequently I will hide them like a Conspirator's dagger. I mean this lest you might inadvertantly mention them, or acknowledge them as your old acquaintances, should you meet with them anonymously in a Newspaper. I need not add that I allude to a certain Bookseller's connection and mine.

How do you like the following song, designed for an Air composed by a friend of mine, and which he had christened "The blue-eyed lassie"[2]:—

I gade a waefu' gate yestreen, went, road, last evening
A gate, I fear, I dearly rue;
I gat my death frae twa sweet een,
Twa lovely een o' bony blue.

'Twas not her golden ringlets bright;
Her lips like roses wat wi' dew;
Her heaving bosom, lily-white,
It was her een sae bony blue.

She talk'd, she smil'd, my heart she wyl'd, lured
She charm'd my soul I wist na how;
And ay the stound, the deadly wound, shock
Cam frae her een sae bony blue.

But spare to speak, and spare to speed;
She'll aiblins listen to my vow: maybe
Should she refuse—I'll lay my dead death
To her twa een sae bony blue.

I must have one line at least to make this new page appear with any grace, and now it is done, give me leave to subscribe myself, Dear Madam, your oblidged friend and grateful humble sert. ROBT. BURNS.

(1) This is the introduction to "The Poet's Progress" as printed by Mr. Scott Douglas from a holograph copy in the possession of his publisher, which he presumed to be the identical copy sent to Dugald Stewart on 20th January 1789. The two fragments transcribed in Burns's letter of the 23rd October from Sanquhar followed, and the lines beginning "O dulness" sent to Mrs. Dunlop on New Year's Day 1789 wound up the poem. Both introduction and conclusion were incorporated in the Third Epistle to Robert Graham of Fintry, and Burns never published anything under the title of "The Poet's Progress." It has to be noted that in sending

the MS. to Dugald Stewart on 20th January 1789, the poet wrote: "The fragment beginning 'A little, upright, pert, tart,' etc., I have not shown to man living till I now send it to you," which we now know to have been untrue, unless he purposely excluded woman from the connotation of "man."

(2) "The Blue-eyed Lassie" was published in Johnson's third volume, set to a tune of Captain Riddel's. Thomson, who published it in his third volume, set it to the tune "The blathrie o't." The subject of the song, Jean Jaffray, daughter of the minister of Lochmaben, married a Mr. Renwick of New York, and died in 1850.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS,
Mauchline.

5th November '88.
[Franked by Kerr.]

Dr. Sr.—I had yours on Monday, and it is now the fast or feast of thanksgiving,[1] according to every one's ideas of the import of those words and the consequences of the great event this day is set apart to commemorate. While nothing can be a stronger proof of the fallibility and contrariety of the human mind than to see the worthiest characters in Britain divided in their opinions whether we ought this day to appear before our Creator with songs of joy and gladness or with the meek sigh and sackcloth of sorrowful sinners groaning under punishment and repentance, I, as an ignorant woman, quietly acquiesce in the ways of providence, and implicitly believe what that does is best, whether rewarding or correcting. Yet I could hardly ever whip a child myself without crying, and far less see another do it. Perhaps no age or realm has ever witnessed more severe discipline than what has fallen to the share of the Stewart race. I was brought up in Revolution principles; reflection ought to strengthen them, and I believe does, although all my affections draw forever cross. You say your heart makes you a Christian, and I doubt mine makes me at least half a Jacobite.

You tell me your modesty cryed Murder! when you read my letter. I write, when 'tis to you, so much from the impulse, I had almost said the inspiration of the minute, that I cannot for my life recall what I could say to create a feeling of that kind. At least, however, I hope you did not suffer a painful death, though your modesty must certainly be more easily hurt than mine, which never yet was wounded by the honest applause of friendship. The

hyperbole and superlative are called indications of a weak mind; therefore 'tis poor weak women are allowed to use them, and generally when they are in earnest, I believe, make ample use of this prerogative, and I suspect most men, when they believe us sincere, allow self-love to give an assenting smile to this amiable female weakness exerted in their favours. Rochefoucault says—

> Not to admire is all the art I know
> To make men happy and to keep them so.

I say to admire is the very thing on earth to make me happiest, and to indulge myself in expressing it with all the enthusiasm I feel, and in all the superlatives that want of expression calls into use, is a pleasure I would not forego for any one I will ever be offered in exchange. So say I, let heros and war-sloops exult in their strength, and leave me at liberty to rejoice in this folly, if it is one, nor will I take your word that I have made you uneasie by it, for I trust you have not so contemptible an opinion of me as to imagine I would set my hand to a syllable more than I thought at the time; and if I have thought too much, I suppose that is an error in judgment you would not put one on the rack to make them retract. On the contrary, I feel this, like most other errors, is always the further in the deeper.

I like several of the songs in the 2nd vol. of the *Museum*, much particularly those beginning "Tho' cruel fate," "Raving Winds, "Thickest Night." One beginning "Cold blows the Wind," and markt Z., I took for yours, and one with a T. for Thomson, author of "The Choice." But I have a particular wish to know who uses the signature of D. Will you be so good as tell me? I am promised a sight of a tragedy wrot by a farmer here. If this promise is kept, I shall tell you what I think of it. I dare not tell you what I think of the characters you sent me last for fear poor squeamish modesty should grow sick again, and you should think me void of all compassion for the *mauvaise honte*. By the bye, ever in contradiction with myself, I was uneasie and vext at being so long without hearing from you, and tantalized and out of humour when I got your letter. Fate plays cross purposes with me of late. You and I, it seems, must go like buckets in a well. You are to be at Dunlop on Hallowday, while I am in East Lothian, and to go to Nithsdale just before I shall return to Ayrshire, which I now think must be in less than a month. And to crown the jest, you are to come to Haddington a month or two after I leave it. I could almost say as you do—"This is business of the Devil's making," but these reprobate phrases don't suit a

lady. As to you, the world call you one so loudly that I am sometimes almost ashamed to attempt your defence. A gentleman told me with a grave face the other day that you certainly were a sad wretch, that your works were immoral and infamous; you lampooned the clergy, and laught at the ridiculous parts of religion, and he was told were a scandalous free liver in every sense of the word. I said I was certain he must be misinformed, and asked if he knew you. He told me he had been in your company and knew it was the case. "I beg pardon," said I, "I could not have guessed you had ever seen him, or read his book, by the character you give of either." Another of the company asked me if I knew you. I said I thought so, and would be exceedingly sorry to be convinced I did not. What did I think of your religion? That it was too exalted and sublime to have any ridiculous parts capable of being laughed at. What of that illiberal mind that could fall foul of so respectable a body of men as the clergy of Scotland? That the Scots Bard was far above it, that no man more regarded the pastors of his people when worthy of their calling, but that those he exposed were wolves in sheep's clothing, the bane of the community, and too black for his ink, low beneath his pen. But I begged to appeal to the lines left in Mr. Laurie's manse as proof positive the clergy were not attacked in a collective body. The writers [lawyers] had in my time pensioned three men to quit practice in their calling, as their characters were too atrocious for the reputation of the profession. It would be much for the interest of some of those he celebrates that the same delicacy should take place among divines. 'Twas observed I was too warm. I could not acknowledge that was possible in behalf of a character I knew, esteemed and admired, and which I thought one must renounce both taste and every amiable disposition of the human soul not to wish well to, and view with that prejudice which inclines to extenuate faults that may exist, instead of listing with malice to smother every talent and virtue, and forge blots that never could fall from either the tongue or pen that composed the "Cotter's Saturday Night." Farewell.—Your much obliged friend and humble servt. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

I have seen the Dane;[2] he is the gentlest savage ever was caught. He would make no figure in Goldsmith's description drawing the tiger by the tongue from his den, but you may perhaps meet him where I am sorry you cannot also meet me at the same time. We are all getting well again as fast as we can, but that

is not in a great hurry. Our secret is known, but not yet declared, and my charge is ready to be honorably given off my hand here. Sure you think I am banished the county, or have forgot every duty, when you could suppose I might still be here three months. —Once more adieu!

5th Novbr. 1788.

John and his wife offer compts. I believe I shall go to Edr. next week. If you write me, direct to the care of William Kerr, Esq., Post Office, Edr.

(1) This day—5th November 1788—was the hundredth anniversary of the landing of William of Orange.

(2) M. Henri, her son-in-law to be. Mrs. Logan of Laicht had told Burns that he was a Dane.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP, care of William Kerr, Esq.,
Post Office, Edinburgh.

MAUCHLINE, 13*th Nov.* 1788.

Madam—I had the very great pleasure of dining at Dunlop yesterday. Men are said to flatter women because they are weak; if it is so, Poets must be weaker still; for Misses Rachel and Keith, and Miss Georgina M'Kay, with their flattering attentions and artful compliments, absolutely turned my head. I own they did not lard me over as many a Poet does his patron or still more his Patroness, nor did they sugar me up as a Cameronian Preacher does Jesus Christ; but they so intoxicated me with their sly insinuations and delicate innuendoes of Compliment that if it had not been for a lucky recollection how much additional weight and lustre your good opinion and friendship must give me in that circle, I had certainly looked on myself as a person of no small consequence. I dare not say one word how much I was charmed with the Major's friendly welcome, elegant manner and acute remark, lest I should be thought to balance my orientalisms of applause over against the finest Quey in Ayrshire, which he made me a present of to help and adorn my farm stock. As it was on Hallowday, I am determined, annually as that day returns, to decorate her horns with an Ode of gratitude to the family of Dunlop.

The Songs in the second Vol. of the *Museum* marked D. are Dr. Blacklock's; but, as I am sorry to say they are far short of his other works, I, who only know the cyphers of them all, shall never let it be known. Those marked T. are the works of an obscure,

tippling, but extraordinary body of the name of Tytler ;[1] a mortal who, though he drudges about Edinburgh as a common Printer, with leaky shoes, a sky-lighted hat, and knee-buckles as unlike as George-by-the-grace-of-God and Solomon-the-son-of-David, yet that same unknown, drunken Mortal is author and compiler of three-fourths of Elliot's pompous *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Those marked Z. I have given to the world as old verses to their respective tunes ; but in fact, of a good many of them, little more than the Chorus is ancient ; tho' there is no reason for telling everybody this piece of intelligence. Next letter I write you, I shall send one or two sets of verses I intend for Johnson's third Volume.

What you mention of the thanksgiving day is inspiration from above. Is it not remarkable, odiously remarkable, that tho' manners are more civilized, and the rights of mankind better understood by an Augustan Century's improvement, yet in this very reign of heavenly Hanoverianism, and almost in this very year, an empire beyond the Atlantic has its REVOLUTION too, and for the very same maladministration and legislative misdemeanours in the illustrious and sapientipotent Family of Hanover as was complained of in the "tyrannical and bloody house of Stuart."

So soon as I know of your arrival at Dunlop I shall take the first conveniency to dedicate a day or, perhaps, two to you and Friendship, under the guarantee of the Major's hospitality. There will soon be threescore and ten miles of permanent distance between us ; and now that your friendship and friendly correspondence is entwisted with the heart-strings of my enjoyment of life, I must indulge myself in a festive day of "The feast of reason and the flow of soul."—I have the honor to be, Madam, your grateful humble servant, ROBT. BURNS.

(1) James Tytler, a son of the manse, born 1747. He began life as a chemist, but ill luck, added to an inclination to literary work, obliged him to give up. He was practically editor of the second edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1777-1784). His extraordinary versatility is shown by the number of his works, many of which he printed himself, having constructed a press from old material. His works include a *History of Edinburgh* and a *System of Geography ;* besides which he translated Virgil's *Eclogues*, wrote poetry, commented on the origin and antiquity of the Scottish nation, and was a voluminous contributor to the current periodical literature. He also experimented with a fire balloon with

partial success, but want of means obliged him to discontinue. From this he was nicknamed "Balloon" Tytler. His political views brought him into trouble as one of the Friends of the People; he fled to Ireland, and in 1793 was outlawed by the High Court of Justiciary. He died in 1804 at Salem, Mass. Andrew Bell was chief proprietor and publisher of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. C. Elliot was an Edinburgh publisher who had a share in the work.

Ad. Miss DUNLOP,[1] Dunlop House.

Monday Morn.

Madam—Tho' I am not always what Glenalvon calls "The shallow fool of coward Conscience," yet I have a something in my bosom, a kind of feeling of Propriety or Impropriety where I am the veriest coward on earth. My horrid sin of this kind against you has compleatly gagged me, that I can't write to, or approach you, were it to redeem me from perdition. If I can pluck up so much courage, I'll call at Dunlop-house on Wedensday or Thursday, perhaps at Wedensday's breakfast hour.—I have the honor to be, Madam, your most penitent humble servt.

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) This note, undated, is placed here conjecturally. The lady to whom it is addressed was doubtless Agnes Dunlop, who afterwards became Mrs. Perochon (see Introduction), and who was buried in the poet's grave.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS,
Mossgill, Mauchline.

MORHAM MAINS, 13*th Novbr.* 1788.
[Franked by Kerr.]

Dr. Sir—I am to acknowledge the favour of two letters[1] from you since my last. You don't know how much I plume myself upon having credit with you to enable me to incur such a debt. Yet, while I own the claim like other bankrupts, I shall probably pay a very slight composition, but I will not, however, wish for horns to stick my creditor or claws to dig my way out of your sight. On the contrary, I am half tempted to arraign Providence that will not allow me to rush into your honoured presence, were it not that sovereign Power has at present made me

sensible things happen sometimes for the best, even when most athwart our wishes; for at this moment I must confess (what the week before I should have deem'd impossible) that I would rather see your letter than yourself. I have for some days past had a return of my former deafness, brought on, too, I think, as it was before, by uneasiness of mind. Mrs. Dunlop was one day taken ill, and I feared a fever for her. My spirits were sunk, too, by rather uneasie apprehensions about my other young people, whose situation is yet hid in night, and who, I much fear, are not so well suited as I could wish to buffet fortune in the dark; nor do I wish the world should see my fears on that head before they are removed or confirmed. 'Tis for most lovers, especially of the modern cast, a more tremendous venture to dare the gulph of matrimony than to jump down the promontory of Leucatelli, for more people can swim the ocean than can rise above the tide of vanity, whose abyss is unfathomable. I trust, however, you have no painful feeling of this truth, which has frequently cut me to the quick. But to call another cause; you ask my opinion of your works. Know, other poets do the same, and you may prepare to behold me bloated with full-blown self-conceit. I told you I expected a sight of a tragedy wrot by a farmer here. I could only obtain it on condition of passing my august verdict on its merits. This, believe me, was almost too strong a doze for all my curiosity to gulp down, for indeed I did not expect my opinion would be such as could consistently with truth and delicacy be told. Yet I had an irresistible desire to see the work, that I might tell you what I thought of it, for really I think at heart this was my motive. I promised, and I honestly performed. "Darthula,"[2] Mr. Mylne of Lochhill's tragedy, gave me so much pleasure, that I asked leave to recommend you to a reading of it should you be at Haddington, and should truly be proud of myself should your ideas and mine meet on its faults and beauties; for I ventured to speak my mind of both in a letter to the gentleman who procured it for me; who told me he would send it to the author, whom I have never seen, but who, I dare say, is a worthy, good-hearted man, possest of a genius to please others and make himself happy. He does not want imagination or elevation of sentiment; his diction is plain, simple, and unaffected, without being low; his moral good and naturally deduced from his story; he introduces the chorus, which I dislike, but manages it so beautifully as to conquer my prejudices on that head, and I seriously advise you to go four miles out of your road in coming to Haddington to see what I am convinced you will think a

sufficient reward for your trouble. Yet I will candidly own, it in my mind wants something I think it would have had, had it been penned by my friend. Besides, the original opulence of the author did not preclude those accidental advantages which decorate and call forth mediocrity often on terms that all the native energy of the human soul must be on the stretch to rise equal to from a less exalted ground, and to which I have perhaps never seen more than one man able to spring up at once unassisted from the pit of helpless depression. This farmer rents £1500 a year, and has married his daughter to an agreeable man with £12,000. These circumstances have made his acquaintance less attractive to me, as they don't require such undoubted powers of character as must be displayed by the man who attains equal or superiour perfection without them. I would gladly have transcribed some lines for you, but I was trusted, and did not hold it honest even in behalf of my friend. I have not time to give a critique on your verses [pp. 107, 108] just now. Suffice to say, they deserve and can bear it. The song I think a sweet, simple little thing, quite fit for a song, but I have not light enough to sign my name, far less to say with what regard I am, Dr. Burns, your sincere friend and humble servt. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

I have lighted the candle to tell you that I believe I shall be in Edr. the week after next, where I may possibly be forced to remain ten days longer, but if you are so good as write me, address to Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop, care of William Kerr, Esqr., Surveyor of the General Post-Office, Edr., when I shall certainly get your letter. All happiness ever attend you and yours wherever you go, and may you meet friends everywhere as sincere as those you leave behind you. I wish you to be as much pleased with the latter as the former, or that any new acquisition should sink the value of the old. Farewell. John and his wife offer compts.

13*th Novr.* '88.

(1) Mrs. Dunlop must have forgotten hers of the 5th; it is unlikely that she received two letters—both missing—between the 5th and the 13th.

(2) James Mylne, farmer and poet, of Lochhill, in the parish of Morham. He died in December of this year, and his literary remains, about which Burns was consulted, were published in 1790 under the title of *Poems, Consisting of*

Miscellaneous Pieces and Two Tragedies, by the late James Mylne, at Lochhill.

To BURNS.

MORHAM MAINS, *26th Nov.* 1788.

Dr. Burns—I have been very ill since I wrote you last. I fear my constitution sympathizes too much with G. R. [King George III.], for, eating and sleeping and looking about as well as women at threescore commonly do, I am deprived of my senses. I have been almost blind and wholly deaf for a fortnight past. I hope you shall never be so well acquainted with this state as to judge truly how much commiseration it claims. How I pity the King!—

When eye nor ear convey or light or sound,
The famish'd mind can hardly stand her ground;
Her gates block'd up from every aid beneath,
The wicket scarce admits of hope or faith;
The noblest virtues of the soul decay,
Even meek-eyed charity is chased away;
Poor fancy tamed strikes but unmeaning notes,
As birds in cages swell their joyless throats.
Where Colston's shady path 'twixt hedge-rows lay
I chearless wand'ring stray'd the other day.
Deep sunk in mud the shoes desert my tread;
Close clasping boughs thick arch above my head;
Angry heaven's dark black'ning aspect lowers;
Chill bitter rain in tumbling torrents pours;
Half blind, and blasted by the breath of Fate,
Deaf to the voice that warn'd me of my state;
Above the threat'ning thunders roll'd unheard,
Around, red forky light'nings flash'd unfear'd;
In languid fullness thought itself was lost,
And too insipid even to be crost.
Now piercing wet dash'd cold through every part,
A friendly letter scrimply eased my heart:
Its kindly warmth (I think) repell'd the rain,
There blustering Boreas seem'd to beat in vain.
O'er the loved lines remembrance grateful run,
The poet bade me, "My best duty done,
Then chearful welcome what I could not shun."
'Tis the first duty sure that's in our power,
To fly each tempest of life's stormy hour.
To right, to left, intent I turn my eye,
And search if haply shelter might be nigh.
I spy'd where long imbower'd in lofty wood
The stately dome of Lennox-love[1] has stood;
Faint memory quicken'd at the gladsome view,
Hollows on hope a back-scent to pursue:
In early prime I held at school a place
With four young inmates of the Stuart race.

I thither sped; the hospitable gate
Spontaneous folds me from the winter's hate,
A gentle nymph in mildest accent spoke
(I heard not when the aweful thunder broke):
Kindness can o'er the elements prevail.
My ear delighted caught her soothing tale.
"My friend, come in this sacred mansion know,
A secret few are ever taught below
(Though Cupid always like a child appears);
Friendship can live to more than forty years."
Fair Stuart's secret I to you impart,
And thank the friendly hand that warm'd my heart.

Spite of my internal heaviness, I have pleasure in marking by what broken starts your genius bursts forth like the first streams that enlighten the dawn of morn, and rather break darkness as give light. I never suspected any thinking being wiser than myself had formed detached lines unappropriated to any particular purpose, but while this similarity between a wonderful man and a silly woman amuses me, I am not able to judge your work; not for want of leisure, for to read your letters is my most important business, the most pleasant and most profitable I have, but that my giddy head is unable to retain thoughts. I shall go to Edr. on Wednesday, if I am tolerably well, where I shall be glad Lady Wallace don't keep me till you are gone. My son could not oblige me more than by his kind behaviour to you, nor do I know which would flatter me most, to believe it the genuine produce of innate taste or of complacence to mine. Meanwhile, I am pleased to pronounce him deficient in neither. As I will carry this to town to be franked, if I then can fix my time for being west, I will tell it in a postscript. Adieu.

MORHAM, *Wednesday.*

Here I am still. A letter this moment tells me Lady Wallace cannot leave town this week; so I have stole two days more of the rational delight a country farmhouse would afford me were I in a state to enjoy it. I am sure nothing in the metropolis can replace it. That you may understand the former pages of this, I must tell you in plain prose that I found in Miss Stuart of Blantyre the companion of my childhood. We met as we parted after an interval of forty-five years. She showed me my name sewed at that time in her sampler, inclosed in a heart, and amid those of her parents and seven brothers and sisters, most of whom are now dead—and so small and finely wrought that I could not perceive it without glasses. Our dialogue on this occasion was much as

follows. Indeed the only poetic fiction is the thunder, for the incident of the letter was real, as it supplied the place of a wet stomacher to a very clay-cold, shivering, lifeless heart, after the only shower I have seen in this country in seven months.

She. Behold the pledge of Innocence and Youth ;
Work'd in true blue, the emblem of pure truth,
Your name there stands !

I. That little name that fills so small a space
Stands highly honoured midst your royal race.

She. Mark where it stands : my fondness fixt your part,
Just in the centre of my inmost heart.
My father, mother, brothers, sisters round ;
Alas ! How many strew the fatal ground !

I. Alas ! How vain for past events to mourn,
Then let us welcome what we cannot shun.
To her your moral, you her kindness I disclose,
And bless in dreams each friend of my repose.

Poor Mr. Myine, the poet I spoke of in my last, unfortunately for me, but more so for him, was kept out of my sight by his wife and seven of his children being all in fevers. He is said to be a man of great worth, but I am told I should not like him. I cannot think how people know, for I never can guess myself who I would like beforehand, seldom tell why after.

(1) Lennoxlove—the name of the seat of the Stuarts of Blantyre, near Morham Mains.

Ad. Mr. Robt. Burns, at Ellisland,
near Dumfries, Mauchline.

Rosecourt,[1] Edr., *Tuesday,*
3rd Dec. 1788.

[Franked by Kerr.]

I am now in Edr., from whence I said in the former sheet I would write and acquaint you of my motions. I cannot hope to be in Ayrshire for yet a week longer, nor dare I hope you will still be there when I come. I sincerely regret this, as seeing the very few friends I like is the greatest enjoyment the world has in store for me, and it is with peculiar pleasure I think you permit me to enroll you in their number, and flatter me that you are sincere, as well as polite, when you return me the compliment. I shall see my good friend Mr. Kerr to-morrow, and commit this to his care for Mossgiel, as I trust, if you are removed, your

brother will have your address, a deposit with which you have forgot to favour me; and in the meantime I shall indulge myself in scribbling whatever comes uppermost, since it will cost you nothing but the trouble of reading, which you know is in your own power to take or not, and which I allege you accordingly sometimes decline. I follow your idea of a progressive sheet, to put you in mind of it, as a plan from which I have already drawn many visions of future delight, as I am conscious your time must now be much too precious to hope you can give me much of it at once, but now and then a start of a few lines may be a relaxation to yourself, and a feast to me beyond what three courses and a dessert could afford. As to your promised visit, whenever you should hear I was come home, I must not reckon on that but as a poetic flight; when I consider the many important affairs lie on your hand, and the many for whom all your utmost efforts are now become requisite, reason tells me it cannot, indeed ought not to be more. And I am too truly your friend to wish you even to see me at the expense of doing what you would find took you too long from the inspection of your now complicated cares, and would appear to other people as well as to yourself, when past, too great a sacrifice to be made to any friend who can be of no real use to you or your family. If I may judge by what I have seen of late, a farmer has no time almost at liberty; at least I have never in seven months seen my son able to afford one day's absence, seldom two hours, without finding something neglected and wrong at his return. His exertions are not called for by so many voices as yours; if they are necessary, yours must be still more so, and I must, although 'tis arguing so powerfully against myself, remind you that both you and I must and ought now to live more for our children than for ourselves: so that I dare not even wish you to come from so enormous a distance to see me with so much fatigue and loss of time to yourself as it were to come for a day from Nithsdale. Yet, should you be remaining in our county when I return, I will positively insist on your promise, and send to claim it, if you let me know by return of post that you will be found so late as the middle of next week; for I think my time will be there and thereabouts; but as it does not depend upon myself, I cannot be positive to a few days out or in. I would like to know who your song "Clarinda"[2] was addrest to, or if it was quite a *jeu d'esprit*. Pray tell me, since you despise prudence so much as sometimes to tell a woman a secret, which I was so unfaithful as to read to one man before you had warned me it was one. However, it is of small consequence, as he is little in the world, and

wholly unacquainted with the travelled monkey[3] whose character I read, but neither named him nor the author. This was the more unfortunate as it was the only instance in which I ever used such a liberty with any production you had entrusted me with, but I really was much taken with the drawing both of it and Crochallan, and wished to see if other people would be the same. The beginning, I think likeways, has a most masterly strength and originality, which truly marks it your own. I am only angry at these kind of masculine productions because they are, when I read them before my trifles, like a beef-steak syned [rinsed] down with water gruel, and make me sick of an amusement pleased me before. Yet, since like a child I have found pleasure in catching butterflys, why should I not just go on playing myself so innocently? Will it not even be more childish to give up the chase in a pet because your game is an ortalonque and mine only a fly?—not a gnat, but of those harmless insects that never sting myself or any one else; whereas when you fall a-satirizing, 'tis as dangerous as King Henry the Fourth's bear-hunting with which they entertained the ladies of the French court, where the bears were like to hug their pursuers to death. Especially when you attack the clergy or the booksellers, they threaten you with a mortal squeeze in return, which I dread may hurt you more essentially than your sharpest sting can do them. They are like game-cocks; they fight with more than natural weapons, and strike their antagonist through the heart. Nor can any letter of mine protect it, as yours did mine in the piece I send you called "Lennoxlove: inscribed to a Friend." Pray tell me what you think of it. I think you were guilty of more than female affectation when you suppose me wanting leizure to read anything you send me. Know I would steal those precious minutes from meat, sleep, company—I'm afraid from my prayers, could I not otherways command it. But you will retaliate, and say with some shadow of reason too, that 'tis all affectation I have said about your ideal visit, for had I set half the value on your time which I pretend to do, I would not have made you squander so much of it at present to so little purpose. So I shall end this, as Bailie Simond does his dinner, with "Nothing furder," supposing you may also use his words too, and reply "I have got satisfaction." Adieu! Write me to the care of William Kerr, Esqr., Surveyor of the General Post-Office, Edr., who will know to give it me here, or send it after me should I be gone. Dr. Sir, farewell. Write me, I beg you, for I am miserably deaf and blind, nor could powers inferior to your own give pleasure to your sincere friend, FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Rose Court was a house in George Street, the first edifice built in New Edinburgh, the foundation stone having been laid in 1767. Possibly Lady Wallace removed thither after the fire in her house in James's Court.

(2) "A Farewell to Clarinda," sent to Mrs. Dunlop early in the year. See *antea*, p. 44.

(3) See Burns's letter of 23rd October, *antea*, p. 105.

Burns's wanderings between Dumfriesshire and Ayrshire now came to a close. In the first week of December he brought his wife to the banks of the Nith, lodging her temporarily in a neighbouring farm-house, as the building at Ellisland was not yet quite finished. It was a happy time for the poet, and his satisfaction with himself and the world showed itself in his writings, both prose and verse, the latter of which included about this period the "Elegy on the Year 1788," "Robin shure in Hairst," "Caledonia, a Ballad," "I hae a wife o' my ain."

To Mrs. Dunlop.

Ellisland, 17*th December* 1788.

My dear honored Friend—Yours, dated Edinburgh, which I have just read, makes me very unhappy. "Almost blind and wholly deaf" are melancholy news of human-nature; but when told of a much-loved and honored friend, they carry misery in the sound. Goodness on your part and gratitude on mine began a tie which has gradually and strongly entwisted itself among the dearest chords of my bosom; and I tremble at the omens of your late and present ailing habit and shattered health. You miscalculate matters widely when you forbid my waiting on you, lest it should hurt my worldly concerns. My small scale of farming is exceedingly more simple and easy than what you have lately seen at Moreham Mains. But be that as it may, the heart of the man and the fancy of the poet are the two grand considerations for which I live: if miry ridges and dirty dunghills are to engross the best part of the functions of my soul immortal, I had better have been a rook or a magpie all at once, and then I should not have been plagued with any ideas superior to breaking of clods and picking up grubs, not to mention barn-door cocks or mallards, creatures with which I could almost exchange lives at any time. If you continue so deaf, I am afraid a visit will be no great pleasure to either of us; but if I hear you are got so well again as to be

able to relish conversation, look you to it, madam, for I will make my threatenings good. I am to be at the New-year-day fair of Ayr, and by all that is sacred in the world, friend! I *will* come and see you. . . .

Your meeting, which you so well describe, with your old schoolfellow and friend was truly interesting. Out upon the ways of the world! They spoil the "social offsprings of the heart." Two veterans of the "men of the world" would have met with little more heart-workings than two old hacks worn out on the road. Apropos, is not the Scotch phrase "Auld lang syne" exceedingly expressive? There is an old song and tune which has often thrilled through my soul. You know I am an enthusiast in old Scotch songs. I shall give you the verses on the other sheet, as I suppose Mr. Kerr will save you the postage.

AULD LANG SYNE[1]

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And auld lang syne?

Chorus—For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet
For auld lang syne.

And surely ye'll be your pint stowp! — tankard
And surely I'll be mine!
An' we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.

We twa hae run about the braes,
And pou'd the gowans fine;
But we've wander'd mony a weary fitt
Sin' auld lang syne.

We twa hae paidl'd in the burn — waded
Frae morning sun till dine: — dinner
But seas between us braid hae roar'd
Sin' auld lang syne.

And there's a hand, my trusty fiere! — friend
And gie's a hand o' thine!
And we'll tak a right gude-willie waught — draught with goodwill
For auld lang syne.

Light be the turf on the breast of the Heaven-inspired poet who composed this glorious fragment! There is more of the fire

of native genius in it than in half a dozen of modern English Bacchanalians. Now I am on my hobby-horse, I cannot help inserting two other old stanzas which please me mightily.

MY BONIE MARY[1]

Go, fetch to me a pint o' wine,
And fill it in a silver tassie, cup
That I may drink, before I go,
A service to my bonie lassie:
The boat rocks at the Pier o' Leith,
Fu' loud the wind blaws frae the Ferry,
The ship rides by the Berwick-Law,
And I maun leave my bonie Mary.

The trumpets sound, the banners fly,
The glittering spears are rankèd ready,
The shouts o' war are heard afar,
The battle closes deep and bloody:
It's not the roar o' sea or shore
Wad make me langer wish to tarry;
Nor shouts o' war that's heard afar—
It's leaving thee, my bonie Mary!

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) Burns deliberately misled Mrs. Dunlop about the authorship of both "Auld Lang Syne" and "My Bonie Mary," just as he told Thomson that he recovered the former from an old man's singing. "Auld Lang Syne" was indeed modelled on one or other of two older songs—one, called "Old long-syne," attributed to both Sir Robert Aytoun and Francis Sempill, the other called "Auld Lang Syne," by Allan Ramsay. Yet the whole is, to all intents and purposes, Burns's own, and the finest stanzas, the third and fourth, are entirely original. So with regard to "My Bonie Mary," Burns writes in his notes in the *Museum* that only the first four lines were old, the rest was his own. These four lines he probably took from a homely ballad stated by Buchan to have been composed in 1636 by Alexander Leslie of Edinburgh, grandfather of Archbishop Sharp.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS,
Ellisland, Dumfries.

DUNLOP, *24th Decbr.* 1788.
[Franked by Kerr.]

Dr. Sir—I am quite in haste to tell you, as I sincerely think you will have pleasure in that intelligence, which to most part of

the world may be very insignificant, that I am once more returned to Ayrshire, and, what is yet more, to my hearing. As to sight, the spectacles do so well now that I almost forget I have lost it. Yet, great is the loss, since it makes one less able to read the soul in the face of our friends. But at threescore one is seldom put to any trouble in that way; so they may the more readily and quietly acquiesce in those faults of the eyes which only preclude an examination of nonentities, tho', thank God! I have some good friends whose characteristic features are by nature too strongly marked for me ever, I hope, to mistake them, and in whom I always find out all and even more than I could ever have looked for when my perceptions were at the best. It is now ten days I have been here—one half of which I have passed in bed without ever having it made. Yet this I reckon well spent, not, as the country folks say, because we get a sight of our sins in that situation, but that I found this confinement tended to remove the temporary punishment of mine by removing the deafness which is at present perfectly gone, and I cannot express the pleasure I feel in being able to share the trifles which commonly circulate around us, and which reason pretends to despise, but without which all her boasted treasures leave us wretched. You say somewhere "Man is not a happy creature," and a few days ago I would have re-echoed "nor woman neither"; but as I am one, I frequently change my mind, and when I received your great packet, found I thought differently from what I had just been doing the moment before. How kind it was to make it so large, when others would never have thought of bestowing a single line on the poor miserable who could not see to read it. Well, I believe the very weight of it sunk my sorrows before I got at the inside. You know 'tis a poetic maxim of mine "Kindness can o'er the elements prevail," and I assure you it has at least in my constitution a wonderful power over every distress and disorder, both of body and mind. Were death himself to attack me, I should draw much supporting courage from the consideration that my obsequies would be engraven on the heart of a poet who, I flatter myself, would be too much concerned to write my epitaph, and might travesty Pope, and, striking his pensive bosom, say "Here is not Gay," and say so without falsehood or affectation; for I deceive myself most egregiously if you would not be melancholy for at least two hours after the first intimation of my demise. I even glory in the thought, and would not exchange it to make any human creature, even myself, happy for double the time. Is not this a noble swatch [sample] of

female generosity that can so sincerely rejoice in the distress of another; yet, take my word on it, whatever others may pretend, we are all alike in these things, and our greatest fear ever is that our friends will be too soon comforted, not that they will grieve too tenderly. However, spite of all your pains to prepare me, I don't expect to creep into my last sleep this year yet, nor am I really shaken with illness, as my female weak way of complaining has led you to believe. On the contrary, I have spent this summer and harvest upon the whole in more health and chearful ease than I had known for several years past, and spite of a few sharp rubs of sickness now and then, have been far better in general than I had for a long while ever looked for a possibility of being in this wafe [solitary], deserted world; for, spite of myself, I still find it so whenever I begin to be sick or serious, unless the Muse, the Bard, or the friend step kindly forward to my relief. To these I have of late been greatly indebted. The first withdraws as our society here grows more numerous; the last cruel fortune has dragged to a woful distance, and I ought not to struggle against her, but welcome what I cannot shun as chearfully as I can, nor even look forward to Ayr Fair with those expectations which the beginning of your last gave birth to, and the end bid vanish into disappointment. And did you really read my lines half a dozen times over? And why don't you tell me their faults? Or are they still not worth a criticism from your hand? I have a family of very unfortunate friends indeed, to whom fate seems to deny everything, and to whom I am therefore able to deny nothing, not even my rhymes. To them I have even left some written copies of one or two pieces, among which is this last. So, should you adopt anything of mine, you may be already detected. But I have a better opinion of your taste than to imagine you run the least risque of making so foolish a sacrifice of your own professional fame. Indeed you have many of mine that never saw the light but to yourself, and your letting it in upon them would strike deeper against you in my mind than as a poet. I therefore look upon it as an impossibility from the friend I so highly regard. I like your first "Hermitage"[1] best; indeed I like it very much. The second is too gloomy, and the change indicates a fickleness I don't wish to meet. In short I am vext to see my favourite discarded for any rival whatever, and feel for it as if it were myself rejected for some newer acquaintance. You see how much I love auld-lang-syne, and what I think due to it. I have found out a rustic poetess[2] whose ambition aspires to be a chambermaid or bairn's-woman [nurse],

but if you are at the fair you shall know all I know about her, and see some of her works; not that I admire them except for being hers. Besides, she writes blank verse, which I don't like. Did you ever see an Ode wrot by an officer beginning "Go, little boy, to yonder tower"? I would wish to hear your opinion of it, that I may see how far it agrees with or differs from mine. You did right to send your last by a private hand, for indeed 'tis a mistake that my friend Kerr would save me postage. I assure you that is a distinction he reserves for the Scots Bard alone, "who (as he told me) was the only instance ought to claim an exemption from the obligations of his duty; that to favour him could never be defrauding the publick, who were all his debtors,"[3] since which I have given him the trouble of all I wrot you. For those you write me I pay them with great pleasure when I cannot get them without it. Only, don't forget the word *single*, the omission of which sometimes cost fivepence. I wish to God you instead of G. R. had as much for every word you could write. Miss M'Kay is gone. Lady Wallace, Mr. and Mrs. Henri, and my former family [are] to pass the winter and spring here; so that we are too many people to have much society, at least of the kind I relish most, but which I very seldom find; for, like all delicate pleasures, it is too easily broken in upon, and at my time of life a small house and a small company seem most consonant to the indolent dispositions of the mind. Even my own colony are oft too large for my shrunk-up soul, whose comprehensive faculties could be all satisfied at Morham, but are sometimes surfeited in this crowded circle. But this is a language no man can understand under thirty, and you must tire of it as I do of hearing French, which my ear cannot interpret a single word of; unless your ideas may perhaps be as premature as they are superlative and spontaneous. Adieu.

My having left no room for a subscription on the other side is proof positive of that esteem and regard with which I am your obliged friend and humble servant,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Burns must have sent Mrs. Dunlop a MS. of the second version of the lines "Written in Friars' Carse Hermitage." He transcribed the first for her in his letter of the 2nd August.

(2) Janet Little (1759-1813), a poetess, known as "the Scottish Milkmaid." She entered the service of Mrs. Henri as a dairymaid at Loudoun Castle, and published a volume of

poems in 1792. She married John Richmond, a labourer, at Loudoun Castle.

(3) Kerr bore a reputation for much greater laxity in the matter of franking his friends' communications.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House.

ELLISLAND, *New-year-day Morning* 1789.

This, Dear Madam, is a morning of wishes; and would to GOD that I came under the Apostle James's description:—"The effectual, fervent Prayer of a *righteous man* availeth much." In that case, Madam, you would welcome in a year full of blessings: everything that obstructs or disturbs tranquillity and self-enjoyment should be removed, and every pleasure that frail humanity can taste should be yours. I own myself so little a Presbyterian that I approve of set times and seasons of more than ordinary acts of devotion for breaking in on that habituated routine of life and thought which is so apt to reduce our existence to a kind of instinct, or even sometimes, and with some minds, to a state very little superior to mere machinery. This day; the first Sunday of May—a breezy, blue-skyed noon sometime about the beginning, and a hoary morning and calm sunny day about the end of Autumn; these, time out of mind, have been with me a kind of holidays. Not like the Sacramental, executioner-face of a Kilmarnock Communion; but to laugh or cry, be cheerful or pensive, moral or devout, according to the mood and tense of the season and myself. I believe I owe this to that glorious paper in the *Spectator*, "The Vision of Mirza," a piece that struck my young fancy before I was capable of fixing an idea to a word of three syllables. "On the fifth day of the moon which, according to the custom of my forefathers, I always *keep holy*, after having washed myself, and offered up my morning devotions, I ascended the high hill of Bagdat, in order to pass the rest of the day in meditation and prayer," etc.

We know nothing, or next to nothing, of the substance or structure of our souls, so cannot account for those seeming caprices in them, that one shall be particularly pleased with this thing, or struck with that, which, on minds of a different cast, makes no extraordinary impression. I have some favorite flowers in Spring, among which are the mountain daisy, the hare-bell, the fox-glove, the wild brier-rose, the budding birk and the hoary hawthorn, that I view and hang over with particular delight. I

never hear the loud, solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer noon, or the wild, mixing cadence of a troop of grey plover in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poesy. Tell me, my dear friend, to what can this be owing? Are we a piece of machinery that, like the Eolian harp, passive, takes the impression of the passing accident? Or do these workings argue something within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to these proofs of those awful and important realities, a God that made all things, man's immaterial and immortal nature, and a world of weal or woe beyond death and the grave, these proofs that we deduct by dint of our own powers and observation. However respectable individuals in all ages have been, I have ever looked on mankind in the lump to be nothing better than a foolish, headstrong, credulous, unthinking mob; and their universal belief has ever had extremely little weight with me. Still I am a very sincere believer in the Bible; but I am drawn by the conviction of a man, not the halter of an ass.

Apropos to an ass, how do you like the following Apostrophe to Dulness, which I intend to interweave in "The Poet's Progress"?[1]—

> O Dulness, portion of the truly blest!
> Calm, shelter'd haven of eternal rest!
> Thy sons ne'er madden in the fierce extremes
> Of Fortune's polar frost or torrid beams.
> If mantling high she fills the golden cup,
> With sober, selfish ease they sip it up;
> Conscious their great success they well deserve,
> They only wonder some folks do not starve:
> The sage, grave hern thus, easy, picks his frog,
> And thinks the mallard a sad, worthless dog.
> When Disappointment snaps the thread of hope;
> When, through disastrous night, they darkling grope;
> With deaf endurance sluggishly they bear,
> And just conclude that "Fools are Fortune's care."
> So, heavy, passive to the tempest's shocks,
> Strong on the sign-post stands the stupid ox.
> Not so the idle Muses' madcap train,
> Not such the workings of their moon-struck brain:
> In equanimity they never dwell,
> By turns in soaring Heaven or vaulted Hell.

I have sketched two or three verses to you, but as a private opportunity offers immediately, I must defer transcribing them. A servant of mine goes to Ayrshire with this, but I shall write you by post. If I am to be so happy as have it in my power to

see you when I go to Ayr-fair, which I very much doubt, I will try to dine at Dunlop in the Wednesday of that week.

If it is good weather in the fair-week, I shall try my utmost; for if I hit my aim aright, it will not be in my power in any given time again.—Farewell! ROBT. BURNS.

(1) See *antea*, p. 107.

Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS,
Ellisland, near Dumfries.

1st Jan. 1789.

Dr. Sir—This is the first day of a New Year. Let me begin it by wishing everything good to him whose genius, but yet more whose kind attentions, has conferred unnumbered obligations and pleasures on the last; whose correspondence has been to me a varied scene of hope and delight, and an intercourse of that mixture between amusement and esteem to which I believed I was become wholly superannuated. May the coming months arrive to you full fraught with all your wishes, and those wishes be what mankind's seldom are, directed to what can make your happiness most truly permanent. Your powers, my good friend, are suited, like the genial rays of the sun, to all climes and seasons; they possess a varied temperament for every soil, and I find your letters equally soothe a melancholy, rejoice a merry, or awaken a languid hour; while they please and oblige me alike at every moment, and in every mood. As for myself, in perfect health, restored to my hearing, surrounded by the numerous family about me, easie and seemingly pleased, believing those at a distance from me have likewise room to be so too; what have I more to ask at this calm evening twilight of my life but grateful sensibility to taste and acknowledge so many blessings? Yet still I own I look forward with anxious impatience to the time of Ayr-fair, and often ask myself the question if you will be there? How gladly would I pay double postage for a letter, even tho' the word *single* should not be on the back of it, that put it in my power to be no longer sceptic on so interesting an article of futurity. Were some fairy or genie to afford me three wishes, I verily believe just now the first I should form would be that this were the Fair-day, the second, that you came to it, and the third, that you left it for your friends here; for, believe me, though I am perfectly sensible I ought not to wish or approve of your coming from Dumfries to see us, I shall be extremely proud you can ever once imagine the visit worth the trouble of your making it from Ayr. I therefore

have resolved to tell you so, though you must pay dear for the intelligence, as my friend Kerr is, I believe, gone to London, and I could not resolve to run the risque of missing the pleasure you had in speculation for me by delaying to say I would count the days betwixt in hope of its accomplishment. Besides, though this is a sort of will-o'-the-wisp idea, I cannot help at same time suggesting that I don't think it is more than twenty miles further if you go to Haddington, as you told me you must do, to come this road; and twenty miles is not a great deal out of a poet's way to see any friends whom his fancy represents in so fair a garb as to deserve his notice in despite of both time and space, those fatal destroyers of all worldly joys. I have read your 22nd of Novbr.[1] Why do you tell me 'tis dissimulation? 'tis the emanations of a heavenly spirit, the soundest judgment and the most benevolent soul. I have long suspected no man was free from fraudful affectation, but I must do you the justice to say that you are almost the only one creature I have ever seen have the good sense to affect something that could render them the more estimable by being real. Most of us leave nature only to assume something worse in her stead. You have certainly only put on her fairest clothing, and it sits so becomingly that I'm sure I should never have guessed it was not your own property. Shall I for the future, when I admire your sentiments, surmise to myself that the writer may be but a wolf in sheep's clothing, or believe you in earnest wherever I would wish my friend to be so? Indeed, this is so much my native bias that I need hardly take advice on the subject, as I much doubt if it is in my power to run counter, even were I to hear an assertion from the mouth of truth herself, as you say, for I can hardly take your own word that you are not expressing exactly what you think in that paper where your principles appear to me as undisguised as your expression; your very wishes wear but a gauze veil, which needs not the lynx's eye of friendship to see through it. I wrot you some days ago by Edr., but apprehend you may not get my letter should Kerr be gone before its arrival there. I shall therefore send this the other road, and if you won't be ill pleased with me for enlarging its size, will enclose an elegy on the death of the poor man whose tragedy I formerly told you I was so well pleased with. His worth of character, his retired modesty of mind, both as a man and an author, the melancholy distress of his wife, children, niece, nephew, and servants, as well as the strangers hired to them at the time of his exit, added to the eagerness I felt to see him, and my disappointment in hearing the dismal story, unhinged

my mind, and I daresay you will not find any justice done the subject; but I put it in better hands by informing you of the circumstances, so shall end by assuring you nothing will give me more pleasure than your verbal critic on this and all you have seen from FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

ON THE DEATH OF MR. MYLNE, AUTHOR OF "DARTHULA," ADDRESS TO ROBT. BURNS

Let all the tears of all the Muses flow,
And yours and mine redouble all their woe!
Yet Grief prepares her sharpest shaft for you,
A brother farmer, and a poet too.

. . . . . .

I give you below a cherard [charade] as a specimene of elegant entertainment in high life, which I cannot even write or spell the name of:—

My first is an engine, my second a stone,
My third is combin'd, not beauty alone,
But what must still please man, woman, and child,
The figure so lovely, the manner so mild.

The word—Cranstone.

(1) A missing letter, perhaps that in which the poet transcribed the second version of the lines "Written in Friars' Carse Hermitage."

We append here the New Year's Day Address to Mrs. Dunlop, which has hitherto, in accordance with Currie's date, been assigned to the beginning of 1790. In the *Centenary* edition, on the strength of Mrs. Dunlop's acknowledgment, on 1st January 1791, of a letter, a poem, and a gilded card from Burns, it is maintained that 1791 is the correct date. The most casual reading of the Lochryan MSS. ought to have shown that the true date was 1789. On the 1st January of that year Burns wrote to Mrs. Dunlop: "I have sketched two or three verses *to* you, but as a private opportunity offers immediately, I must defer transcribing them." On the 22nd Mrs. Dunlop acknowledged an address which "proclaims my age and infirmities by pointing out that deafness which, thank Heaven! is at present gone." Compare the line in the poem—

Deaf as my friend, he sees them press.

It is almost superfluous to point out the other internal evi-

dence of its date that the poem contains. But, as much has been made of the reference to a grandchild's cap that Mrs. Dunlop was making, it may be noted that the perpetuity of that occupation with her was a subject of jest with Mrs. Dunlop, and that, moreover, she had been congratulated by Burns on the birth of a grandchild at the end of October 1788. Finally, it was in 1788 that Rachel Dunlop painted her sketch of Coila, as the correspondence proves, and while it is probable that Burns conceived her as still touching it at the beginning of 1789, it is scarcely possible that he would refer to the incident in 1791, or 1790 either. An allusion in Mrs. Dunlop's letter of 6th April 1790 may be noted, and it is all but certain that the poem which Mrs. Dunlop acknowledged on 31st December 1790 (not 1st January 1791) was "Tam o' Shanter."

Sketch—New Year's Day. To Mrs. Dunlop

This day, Time winds th' exhausted chain,
To run the twelvemonths' length again:
I see the old, bald-pated fellow,
With ardent eyes, complexion sallow,
Adjust the unimpair'd machine,
To wheel the equal, dull routine.

The absent lover, minor heir,
In vain assail him with their prayer;
Deaf as my friend, he sees them press,
Nor makes the hour one moment less.
Will you (the Major's with the hounds;
The happy tenants share his rounds;
Coila's fair Rachel's care to-day,
And blooming Keith's engaged with Gray)
From housewife cares a minute borrow—
That grandchild's cap will do to-morrow—
And join with me a-moralizing—
This day's propitious to be wise in.
First, what did yesternight deliver?
"Another year is gone for ever."
And what is this day's strong suggestion?
"The passing moment's all we rest on!"
Rest on—for what? what do we here?
Or why regard the passing year?
Will Time, amus'd with proverb'd lore,
Add to our date one minute more?
A few days may—a few years must—
Repose us in the silent dust.
Then, is it wise to damp our bliss?
Yes—all such reasonings are amiss!

The voice of Nature loudly cries,
And many a message from the skies,
That something in us never dies:
That on this frail, uncertain state,
Hang matters of eternal weight:
That future life in worlds unknown
Must take its hue from this alone;
Whether as heavenly glory bright,
Or dark as Misery's woeful night.

Since, then, my honor'd first of friends,
On this poor being all depends,
Let us th' important *now* employ,
And live as those who never die.
Tho' you, with days and honors crown'd,
Witness that filial circle round
(A sight life's sorrows to repulse,
A sight pale Envy to convulse),
Others now claim your chief regard;
Yourself, you wait your bright reward.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Stewarton.

MOSSGIEL, *Wedensday Morning.*
[*Jan.* 1789.]

No ill-weather in Hay or Harvest ever gave me so chagrining a disappointment. This morning I had set apart for a visit to my honored Friend—you cannot imagine, Madam, what happiness I had promised myself; when behold, "the snows descended, and the winds blew," and made my journey impracticable. As it will be impossible for me to wait a journeyable day, I send you this to apologise for my seeming neglect, and to acknowledge the receipt of two [1] kind Epistles from you, since I wrote you on New Year's Day. I had got a hundred and fifty things to say to you, which a hundred and fifty sheets of paper would not record; but I shall be in Ayrshire in the Spring, and you know with what rapture two Poetic folks will meet, amid opening daisies, budding hawthorns, and fragrant birks. Now I talk of Poetic, you must know, as I came to Sanquhar on Saturday evening—the landlord and landlady are my particular acquaintances—I had just dispatched my dinner, and was sitting in a family way over a friendly bowl, glad that my weary body and soul had found out so comfortable a place of rest—when lo! the quondam Mrs. Oswald [2] wheeled into the courtyard with an immense retinue, and the poor Bard is oblidged, amid the shades of night, bitter frost, howling hills and icy cataracts, to goad his jaded steed twelve miles farther on to another stage. O for a muse, not of heroic fire but satiric aqua-

fortis, to gnaw the iron pride of unfeeling greatness! Before I reached the other stage, I composed the following, and sent it off at the first Post-office for the *Courant*:—

ODE, SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF MRS. O—— OF A——[3]

Dweller in yon dungeon dark,
Hangman of creation, mark,
Who in widow-weeds appears,
Laden with unhonored years?
Noosing with care a bursting purse,
Baited with many a deadly curse?

STROPHE

View the wither'd Beldam's face;
Can thy keen inspection trace
Aught of Humanity's sweet, melting grace?
Note that eye—'tis rheum o'erflows,
Pity's flood there never rose:
See these hands, ne'er stretch'd to save,
Hands that took—but never gave.
The Great despis'd her and her wealth;
The poor-man breath'd a curse by stealth.
Keeper of Mammon's iron chest,
Lo! there she goes, unpitied and unblest,
She goes, but not to realms of everlasting rest!

ANTISTROPHE

Plunderer of armies, lift thine eyes
(A while forbear, ye torturing fiends);
Seest thou whose steps, unwilling, hither bends?
No fallen angel kick'd from upper skies;
'Tis thy trusty quondam mate,
Doom'd to share thy fiery fate
She, tardy, hell-ward plies.

EPODE

And are they of no more avail,
Ten thousand glittering pounds a year?
In other worlds, can Mammon fail,
Omnipotent as he is here?
O bitter mockery of the pompous bier,
While down the wretched Vital-part is driven!
The cave-lodg'd Beggar, with a conscience clear,
Expires in rags, unknown, and goes to Heaven.

To soften the matter a little, I altered the title to Mrs. A—— of O——. I was afraid they should suspect me for the author.

I shall be impatient to hear from you. Adieu !—I am ever, Dr. Madam, your oblidged friend and humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) Only one is extant.

(2) Mary Ramsay, daughter of Alexander Ramsay, a Jamaica merchant, brought large estates in America and the West Indies, on her marriage, to Richard Oswald, son of the Rev. George Oswald, Dunnet, Caithness. Richard Oswald acquired great wealth as a London merchant and as an army contractor ("plunderer of armies") in the Seven Years' War. He was one of the commissioners who arranged with Franklin and his colleagues at Paris the peace between Great Britain and the United States. He purchased Auchencruive in Ayrshire, and lived there till his death in 1784.

(3) The Ode did not appear in the *Courant;* Burns sent a copy on 23rd March to Dr. Moore, with an explanation of its origin that differs only verbally from that which he gave Mrs. Dunlop. The Ode was published in the London *Star* of 7th May without the couplet in the first strophe—

> The Great despis'd her and her wealth ;
> The poor man breath'd a curse by stealth.

FRAGMENT

To BURNS.

[*22nd January* 1789.]

—in consequence of this horrid snow storm, which, however, has not been so dreadful as your imagination or the friends who were unwilling to part with you would represent it. They would tell you it must be impassable here, whereas on the other side the question I must inform you my son went a visiting on Wednesday, and to-day we had strangers from a distance here. I felt a kind of chagrine in seeing them, as it shewed me the road lay open, and that you might have come from Ayr (if you were there), if I had not convinced you that I did not wish it, or if you had wished it very earnestly yourself. Now, I hardly know which of these alternatives I would least like to fix upon as the cause of that absence I so much regret. It is quite tantalizing to think that you have been five times at Dunlop last year, and I have never once seen you, who, I am sure, would have set more value on the visit than all the rest put together. But thus the good things of this world are frequently shared out, and we ought, spite of all, to

be thankful for our most scanty portion. You see your moral lessons are not lost upon me. Nay, I flatter myself you may improve by writing them, as well as I by reading. Meantime, I consider myself as obliged and honoured even by an address which proclaims my age and infirmities by pointing out that deafness which, thank Heaven! is at present gone. If it must return, at least I shall hope my friend and my enemy (the only one I know of having) shall not see me on the same day. You say you will polish the New Year's Day piece. I protest against every alteration. Every address to a friend or from a friend ought to stand in the first chalk, the spontaneous effusion of the soul, uncorrected by any secondary consideration. In short, I cannot part with one word you have ever meant should be mine. Leave it to the Royal button-maker [George III.] to give his works the *fion* [Fr. = finishing touch], and act like your true master nature, who puts forth all his in pristine glory. I was got just here when I was interrupted to receive yours from Fanny Burns.[1] Poor thing! Her cheek glowed and her eyes sparkled as she told me she has one for me from her cousin.

> Your oaten reed of sweet celestial sound
> Makes orphan-hearts with grateful joy rebound!
> To gen'rous love one tie points out another,
> A mother's children, or a father's brother.
> . . . . . .

I have just been reading your infusion of gall, wormwood and aquafortis. I had been half cursing your mare myself as I found care of her had frighted you from venturing this length. I had not, however, vented much ill-nature; only wished poets had never rode in coaches and lost the use of their legs, or stood in awe of spoiling their steed, but strutted still afoot like old Homer or Ossian; when I was struck with remorse at finding myself so distanced in the race of spleen. Are you not a sad, wicked creature to send the poor old wife straight to the devil because she gave you a ride in a cold night? I am sure your wrath had great need of a cooler too, but few of us know our own necessities. Lord help us! But what is worse than all, that it spoils a fair thought I had drest out for the door of a moving library I have in a box, and was as follows—

> This little box by fortune seems design'd
> A motley emblem of the owner's mind;
> There folly reigns with unrelenting sway,
> Here wit lies hid from wisdom's scorching ray.
> Here Milton and Cervantes have their parts,
> There Blair and Spenser charm with varied arts.

The holy precepts of our faith lie here ;
Our country's love by Wallace rendered dear.
The good Aurelius on this shelf shall shine
(O grant my God his virtues may be mine !)
Now Row and Mallet both adorn this cell,
And Burns shall here in future volumes swell.
. . . . . .

I won't write you again this great while, for I am going to be very busy sewing shirts for my son, if I can for blindness. I ought to send your Spenser, but I feel loath to part with it yet. I could get you Voltaire's *Maid of Orleans*, but I have heard such a character of it that I am afraid I ought not to take it into my own hand, or reach it to yours. But of this you must judge yourself, as it is neither a letter or language I can read. Only, remember you must never say you had it from me, or if it is undecent, allow it to corrupt either your heart or your writings ; or I shall never forgive myself for having any hand in gratifying a curiosity in which I do not share. I saw your favourite Mr. Adair[2] at Edr. ; he mentioned you almost as partially as you did him to me. He is a relation of mine—I wish he were also an acquaintance. I would be glad you renewed your intercourse with him ; if that could bring it about, it would really be doing me a favour, for a reason I shall probably tell you some day or other, if ever we are ordained to meet, which I begin somewhat to doubt. I am too old and too cold for poetic raptures to be inspired either by blooming hawthorn or budding birks, nor by your account can aspire to class with the hare-brain'd heads of inspiration—

Since I in mediocrity am born to dwell,
Can neither soar to Heaven nor dare to sink to Hell.

Apropos to birch, I, who am always very prudent for my neighbours, am more than half of opinion you should, instead of a holly garland, get a birch rod as a reward for your Ode, since it was torturing the living to be avenged of the senseless dead. Remember, this is only poetic justice, and not pronounced by me.

Curst be the line, how smooth soe'er it flow,
That tends to make one worthy man my foe.

For, as the lines may have beauty and merit if unappropriated, I would absolve them and mercifully only punish the guilty author, whose rash flights on Pegasus are calculated to break his own neck instead of burning the innocent Ode, which, without a name

or date is a moral sermon against avarice, speculation and oppression. Perhaps you may be as disinterested yourself as the Capt. of the City Guard of Edr., who cryed to the enraged mob to take his body but spare his wig. I heard a man say lately he had seen a poem of yours so grossly indelicate he was ashamed to read it alone on a brae side. Could I have believed this, I would blush to write you, or call you my acquaintance and a friend I valued. I hope, if it is the case that you have once been so far to blame, it was at least before we had ever met, and that this is one of the follies long cast to air and polished off by mine, if not by better company. Farewell! for now I'm sure you find I fatigue myself and you writing too long. I believe Kerr is still in Scotland, but as I am not sure, will send this by my young namesake.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Burns's cousin, daughter of his uncle Robert, who died in Stewarton. The poet showed great kindness to his cousins after the old man's death (3rd January 1789), and took Fanny into his household.

(2) Dr. James M'Kittrick Adair, Burns's companion on his tour in the Devon Valley in October 1787, and husband of Charlotte Hamilton.

To BURNS.

DUNLOP, *24th* I believe of *Janry* 1789.

Dr. Burns—It is but two days since I told you I would not write again for a great while, and lo! here I am already with the pen in my hand. Now, should you be inclinable to complain of this breach of my promises, and reproach me with being worse than my word, I shall certainly repent the right I have given you as a friend to find fault, and wish once more to reserve the priviledge politeness always allows my sex of never being in the wrong. But I will hope this is an error to which you may indulge a little partial favour; so shall tell you from whence it proceeds. You must then know Mr. Mylne of Lochhill, who died a very few weeks ago, was a very great friend of my son John's, indeed more so than any man in East Lothian, except one other, who is also dead this last week. I had last night a melancholy letter from John, where, after telling me this double unforeseen disaster, he adds—

"There was found in Mr. Mylne's cabinet an address to Burns, I am informed (by Mr. Carfrae [1]) *very capital;* it was inclosed in a letter, and had every appearance of being wrote just before his

death with an intention of being sent to Mr. Burns. I told poor Mylne's son-in-law that you said something about an elegy. He wished much to have seen it, and expressed an earnest hope that it might be wrote perhaps by Burns. They are to send the address to me in a few days to be forwarded through your means according to the seeming desire of the deceased."

This for my son. I, finding the death of the man whose dramatic piece was still vibrating on my ear, and the dreadful fate of a family a few days before in an enviable state of health and prosperity, affect my very soul, and incline me to throw my poor ideas together upon paper, foolishly fancied you might be struck with a similar desire, and therefore said to John I might possibly be able to send him an elegy on the poet if it could be consolatory to any of his family to see one. Now, John, by repeating this, had brought me under the necessity of producing something or disappointing the fond wish of the afflicted. Should I transmit the lines I sent you, I am apprehensive they would pass for yours, and bring disgrace upon your past and distrust upon your future fame, which I could not rub off in any way but by acknowledging them myself, which is among the last expedients I would willingly be reduced to accept. Should the circumstances I formerly told you and those I now relate move the gentle spirit which I know frequently inhabits your breast, and should your compassion flow with the tenth part of the ease, strength or eloquence that accompanyed a late overflow of the gall with which you embalmed the memory of a person whose name was before odious to me (from private resentment), I will much more seriously commend what will still be in unison with my own feelings than I before blamed you for an attack which, I confess, gratified my own spleen in every line, but which I never have shewed but to my son Andrew, as I am sure it would make a loud cry against you were you pointed to as the author. I feel a great desire to see this address to you, and still more to hear if the sad story of its author touches those invisible threads that tremble over a birk-bud or a hawthorn bloom, and convey quick sensibility from their narrow base to their almighty original. Indeed, my good friend, if this produce not a few lines of heavenly song, you will disappoint me as much as it can Mr. Sherrif or Carfrae. Tho' at the same time that I do not think the last of these gentlemen devoid of taste, I own I do not build much on the approbation he bestows on, as it were, the last words of a long-known and much honoured friend, whose death would fall like a thunderclap, and must be long and warmly lamented by a whole county where he was idolized

(although his genius was overlooked or uncomprehensible) for his modest, quiet, inoffensive, useful life, and honest, pious conversation, free from every arrogant, assuming air of importance or superiority, either as a farmer or a scholar, in both which points the knowing considered him as eminent, but the latter of which was probably a bright beam that only hurt eyes unaccustomed to behold its blaze when it chanced to be discover'd by his neighbours. Yet I own Mylne is to me almost the poet of creative imagination, as fate forbade my ever seeing him, but I am sure his friends must now feel in reading his last address (which I believe was suggested by my having begged leave to introduce you to him should you be in that part of the country) something similar to what I would do should I be doomed to read your last production after your funeral, instead of looking down upon it, as I hope to do, from a more elevated station than this world can afford; tho' even in this case there would remain a considerable distraction, as although clever, sensible men, their sensations on this occasion would follow after mine at as great a distance as my ideas humbly tread after yours where we happen to think in unison, but where my words can no more express your thoughts than the faint reflection this moment on the cold, wet surface of decaying jaundiced snow does my figure. This is Sunday. I would spend it with more pleasure in writing you than I dare suppose you can have in reading anything I ever wrote, did not the post remind me it is time to fold up my letter and give it him. Perhaps it may reach you before my last sent by little Fanny. Poor thing! She will have a cold scramble through the snow; so without your arm she might have had through the world. I wonder when I think of these things if the everlasting rewards of the good are as superlatively different as the gifts and inspirations which nature lends the candidates who start for them. Adieu!—Believe me, with daily encreasing esteem, Dr. Sir, your sincere friend and obliged humble sert. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Should a packet come for you, may I open it? Tell me this, and what aim you have missed that allows you to name spring for being in Ayrshire. You see I have forgot and wrot too far to fold. Were you to pay it, I would grudge the clean paper; yet don't save yours upon me. I assure you 'tis my favourite expense, perhaps the only one where I have not sometimes been a miser—a bold confession this as you treat the character, even where most eminently successful. But I don't know how I have pict up courage never to stand in that awe of you most people would

think you were intitled to, nor I hope have ever disoblidged by this want of deference.

(1) Mr. Carfrae, minister of Morham, who afterwards wrote Burns about the publication of Mylne's poems.

This year, which began with the New Years' Day Address to Mrs. Dunlop, is exceedingly rich in letters, both new and old, from the poet to his friend. She was truly at this time his "confidate," and he did not allow many weeks to pass without sending to Dunlop a compound of prose and verse substantial enough to satisfy the vanity of the most exacting correspondent. The letter which follows is notable not only for its poetic contents, but also for the poet's vindication—not the only one he offered to Mrs. Dunlop—of the practice of composing Fescennine verse.

Ad. MRS. DUNLOP of Dunlop.
To be left at the Stewarton Carrier's
Quarters, Kilmarnock.

ELLISLAND, 5*th Feb.* 1789.

I have rummaged every Stationer's shop in Dumfries for a long and broad, ample and capacious, sized sheet of writing paper, just to keep by me for epistles to you, and you see, dear Madam, by this honest-looking page, that I have succeeded to a miracle. I own indeed you deserve a jolly letter. In the first place, you are no niggard that way yourself, a quality absolutely necessary in a friendly correspondence; and in the next place, you seem determined not only to deserve my friendship such as it is, but to buy it. There is a spirit in receiving as well as in giving presents; and I insist, Madam, that you shall give me credit for a very considerable portion of the former, as I have always accepted the many kind instances of your beneficence, without expressing or even feeling any of that pettishness of stricken pride which so many people mistake for true spirit. I am a miserable hand at your fine speeches; and if my gratitude is to be reckoned by my expression, I shall come poorly off in the account. Your benevolent notices of my poor, little cousin, I cannot pass in silence: for your goodness where your humble servant has been the object, a chearful honest, thank you, is all I can say about it. In giving me your friendship, Madam, you have given me a solid,

permanent addition to my happiness; and we shall not quarrel about the ceremonials of it.

I have received both your letters, and on the first coming to hand, I would have written you by post; but as it rejoices my heart to send you a packet, I have waited for the return of one of my Mauchline friends who has been with me this week, to forward it without that cursed postage.

Your story of poor Mills [Mylne] has much interested me. If it is in my power, Madam, to gratify your wishes by a little compliment, in the way of my trade, to the memory of a friend of yours, you know it will give me the highest pleasure to do it. If the epistle he has done me the honor to write me, come to your hand, open it and welcome. Still, you must make me this allowance in your commands, that if the capricious baggage, my Muse, is not propitious, I will not attempt any thing on the subject. I have had themes on my hands for years, without being able to please myself in my best efforts.

There is a small river, Afton,[1] that falls into Nith, near New Cumnock, which has some charming, wild, romantic scenery on its banks. I have a particular pleasure in those little pieces of poetry such as our Scots songs, etc., where the names and landskip-features of rivers, lakes, or woodlands, that one knows, are introduced. I attempted a compliment of that kind, to Afton, as follows: I mean it for Johnson's *Musical Museum.*

Flow gently, clear Afton, among thy green braes,
And grateful I'll sing thee a song in thy praise;
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, clear Afton, disturb not her dream.

Thou stock-dove whose echo resounds through the glen,
Ye blackbirds that sing in yon wild thorny den,
Thou green-crested plover thy screaming forbear,
I charge you disturb not my slumbering Fair.

How lofty, clear Afton, thy neighbouring hills,
Far-mark'd with the courses of clear-winding rills;
There daily I wander as noon rises high,
My flocks, and my Mary's sweet cot, in my eye.

How pleasant thy banks and green vallies below,
Where wild in the woodlands the primroses blow;
There oft as mild evening weeps over the lea,
The sweet-scented birk shades my Mary and me.

Thy crystal stream, Afton, how lovely it glides,
And winds by the cot where my Mary resides:
How wanton thy waters her snowy feet lave,
As gathering sweet flowerets she stems thy pure wave.

Flow gently, clear Afton, among thy green braes,
Flow gently, sweet river, the theme of my lays,
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, clear Afton, disturb not her dream.

I believe I formerly mentioned some of the following verses to you, but I have, since, altered them with a view to interweave them in an epistle from an unfortunate lady whom you knew. Whether I may ever finish it, I do not know, but I have one or two of the principal paragraphs already by me, of which the following is one [2] :—

Now, maddening, wild I curse that fatal night ;
Now bless the hour that charm'd my guilty sight.
In vain the laws their feeble force oppose,
Chain'd at his feet they groan Love's vanquish'd foes ;
In vain Religion meets my shrinking eye ;
I dare not combat, but I turn and fly :
Conscience in vain upbraids th' unhallow'd fire ;
Love grasps her scorpions, stifled they expire :
Reason drops headlong from her sacred throne,
Thy dear idea reigns, and reigns alone ;
Each thought intoxicated homage yields,
And riots wanton in forbidden fields !

By all on high, adoring mortals know !
By all, the conscious villain fears below !
By what, alas ! much more my soul alarms,
My doubtful hopes once more to fill thy arms !
Even shouldst thou, false, forswear the guilty tie,
Thine, and thine only I must live and die !

I am very sorry that you should be informed of my supposed guilt in composing, in some midnight frolic, a stanza or two perhaps not quite proper for a clergyman's reading to a company of ladies. That I am the author of the verses alluded to in your letter, is what I much doubt. You may guess that the convivial hours of *men* have their mysteries of wit and mirth ; and I hold it a piece of contemptible baseness, to detail the sallies of thoughtless merriment or the orgies of accidental intoxication, to the ear of cool sobriety or female Delicacy.

I intend setting out for Edinburgh on Monday se'ennight, and shall be there about a week. I inclose you a piece of my prose,[3] which, for obvious reasons, I send you for your *sole* amusement : it is dangerous ground to tread on. A lover of Scots Drink can never forgive the late usage of our D——rs. If you honor me with a letter during my stay in town, please direct to the care of Peter Hill, Bookseller, Parliament Square.—I have the honor to be, Dear Madam, your highly oblidged humble servt.

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) This statement, while it throws no light on the identity of the Mary of the song, settles beyond doubt the vexed question of the name-place of "Sweet Afton." The song is No. 389 in the fourth volume of Johnson's *Museum*. Note that the original epithet was "clear" not "sweet," an instance of a second thought leading the poet astray.

(2) The second version of "Passion's Cry," first sent to Clarinda (see Appendix B), and now adapted to the case of Mrs. Maxwell Campbell of Skerrington, and supposed to be addressed by her to her paramour from the West Indies. See *Chambers*, vol. ii. p. 67; vol. iii. p. 37. 1896. Mrs. Dunlop had known Mrs. Maxwell Campbell before her fall.

(3) The "Address of the Scotch Distillers to the Right Hon. William Pitt." See *Chambers*, vol. iii. pp. 59-61.

To BURNS.

DUNLOP, 10*th Febry*. [1789].

Dr. Burns—I have been very busy since I wrot you last, at least busy for a lady, who, if the fairest, are certainly not the most useful part of creation. I have in the last six weeks or thereabout made my son six holland shirts, which, blind as I am, is no small undertaking, when one considers, too, of what pleasures I have deprived myself meantime, and that while I have been painfully earning the twelve or fifteen shillings my work would have cost, I have not even indulged myself in writing a single letter to you, who are the approven correspondent of my choise, and whose letters I would not exchange for all the intellectual feast I could have gathered from the Alexandrian Library (especially as it would be mostly Greek or Latin). Do you think that petty sum, even to such a miser as I, should be an equivalent for so much self-denial? A common calculator would at once answer No; but I have another manner of stating the accompt. When I work I consider myself not only as intitled to the price of my labour, but as unaccountable also for as much of my income as I should in the space of time have lost at cards or squandered in some amusement suited to my rank and circumstances, and in those decorations which vanity or custom seem to appropriate to my age and situation, and which my family would not have thought interested or selfish my turning from theirs wholly to my own use. Thus, as the reward of my industry, I reckon myself

at liberty to trifle away something not exceeding a great deal what I have saved them in cash, and where the satisfaction to myself may be in some degree proper turned to the advantage I hope they will reap by my sober moderate example in the future imployment of their time. Now, if my arithmetic can be trusted, I do not rate this too high at £5. My head therefore, while my hands were going, was intently employed on solving this problem, "What shall I do with this that it will please me most and longest?" I have no taste for dress; the sum can be of no import to all my children; to give it to one would be like discord throwing an apple among the goddesses. To be sure, I may buy a lottery ticket, at least part of one, but alas! I have little faith, and in truth no desire for wealth. Therefore hope will be cold and insipid and disappointment fretting in this poor, abortive South-Sea scheme. At this moment of my speculation fancy presented a vision which made me happy for a moment, although the £30,000 prize could not do so in idea for myself. I put the note into an old snuff-box, saying to myself with exultation at the discovery, "This will buy a quarter chance for my friend Burns. Should he have as little faith as I have, he will not tell me so, but will convert it into something that will please himself here. I can never be disappointed, and shall for a year to come enjoy the dear delight of knowing that there is a possibility of my having been the means of making the fortune of a man whose talents I admire, whose character I esteem, and whose friendship I flatter myself I in a considerable degree possess; to whom my country owes much and pays little, who may henceforth celebrate still more than he has already done the fame of my forefathers, and do it the more warmly for my sake. Yes, money for once does make me happy, and nothing shall divert it from this channel, where I feel it able to pour forth a great, an innocent, and inexhaustible spring of joy, that will flow uninterrupted for twelve or fourteen months in spite of Fortune herself. Nay, should she then do as I would have her, I shall half forgive many a scurvy trick she has heretofore played me." So saying, I shut the lid, and shut it shall remain till I know my letters go so safe as may tempt me to trust this treasure of future hope to the same conveyance; for of late I have had some doubt from your silence which I in vain cast about to find a reason for. Sometimes I think you have not received my two last letters; sometimes I fear lest any expression or omission of mine has verified in your mind a prediction you long ago uttered that I would not have delicacy to carry on a correspondence without hurting you. If I

have done so, I dare not say I would pluck out an eye or cut off a hand, but I would throw my pen in the fire, and blot out the offending particle with a tear of sincere penitence, to be again reinstated in my own forgiveness and your favour, tho', unless I have whipt myself out of it with the birch-rod you put in my way, and which female wit, which is always foolish and often ill-bred, led me to catch it when I was affecting not to be pleased with your inimitable Ode, which Churchill might have been proud of, I cannot guess why you should deprive me of a letter now and then, when you know what pains I have bestowed to draw from you that correspondence I was shunning from almost every other quarter. Make me easie on this point if you can, and don't allow me to look back with regret to Agt. last, when I heard from you four times in one month. Yet I would not be unreasonable. I would allow you to be silent in seed-time and harvest, or whenever you were better employed for Mammon or the Muses. Only, I would like you told me what you were about beforehand, or shewed me afterwards. I wrot you a long letter by Fanny Burns, and sent you a book, which I stole for that purpose half an hour before, having heard it was very scarce, and perhaps only for that reason much valued. I yesterday received the inclosed letters and poem to send you, which I take the earliest opportunity of doing. I shall make no farther comment than by saying I do think the only Scots a man ever tryed to write to me must appear a badly chosen specimen of English tragedy, and would hardly promote the interest of the family in any future publication. I have altered and transposed some lines of my Elegy on Mr. Mylne at the beginning and end thus. Ending as below :—

Let all the tears of all the Muses flow,
And yours and mine redouble all their woe ;
Yet Grief reserves her sharpest shaft for you,
A brother-farmer and a poet too.
Should lightning blast the Lover's painted dome
And make his nuptial bed a funeral tomb,
Not more the shoke your bosom-chords could tear,
And less the loss society would bear
Beyond the leech's salutary skill, etc.
. . . . . .
And Cormac greet him with a prince's love,
The King of Kings his words and works regard,
And crown his goodness with a great reward.

In this shape it will appear as a letter wrot you with the accounts of his death, and perhaps those who wish it so may

flatter themselves it is not only to but by you, as it will be sent anonymous, and every one does not know hands.

You say one always writes best where the heart is really interested in the subject. Now, tell me how you like the following address to a young lady of your acquaintance, where I asure you the author was much interested.

When French Marcatchi forms our British race
To move in all the elegance of grace,
The first exertions of the youthful fair
Distort the figure and degrade the air.
The awkward jump may fill us with surprize,
But pours no pleasure on our sated eyes:
So the first efforts of the feeling brain
Contorts the face and raise each swelling vein;
Quick sensibility in hurried starts is seen,
A childish hoyden romping on the green;
Her kindness forward, and her anger loud,
Her carriage rustic, and her spirit proud.
A generous frenzy animates that soul,
Where in-born rectitude rejects controul.
From her bright eyes keen flashes ardent dart,
Deep crimson dyes each motion of her heart.
A hulkish form, with intervening shade,
Obscures the lovely work by Nature made,
Till passing time a magic vail prepare
Of modest beauty's mild attractive air;
Move to soft melody life's shifting scene,
And mark its ever calm gentle and serene.
When sage experience holds the bearing rein,
That slacks the nerves to harmony again,
Then the pure honey of the melting soul
Throws a milk liquid lustre on the whole;
Bids neat simplicity of dress adorn,
And gesture modest as the blushing morn.
Whose sweet effulgence lumid tears bedew,
Such as soft love or pity draws from you.
So too be yours the gentle whispering gale,
And sweet perfumes her vernal breath exhale,
Diffusing pleasure to each living thing
Young, gay and chearful as the blythsome spring.
Like the fair plant that from our touch withdraws,
Shrink mildly fearful even from applause;
Be all a mother's fondest hope can dream,
And all you are, my charming girl, seem.
Straight as the fox-glove ere her bells disclose,
Mild as the maiden-blushing hawthorn blows.
Fair as the fairest of each lovely kind,
Your form shall show some shadow of your mind.
Your manners shall so true your soul express,
That all shall long to know the worth they guess.
Congenial hearts their partner shall espie,
And ladies love the maid they must envy.

17th Febry.

I was just got this length when I had yours where you answer me as it were by anticipation. I read this over again, and half inclined to put it in the fire; yet I remembered it was your property, and I had no right to abstract it from you. I therefore send it immediately, tho' half afraid yours has been so long on the road it may miss you. I shall let you pay for it, as I am not sure if Mr. Kerr is in town. I will even run the chance of losing you 8d. by adding a cover rather than excite curiosity by telling the public that you are in Edr.,[1] when perhaps you would not chuse to be honour'd with their notice. I will also send you the packets I received for you from my son John two days ago, containing Mr. Carfrae's letter and the poem with the altered lines on poor Mylne, which you may dispose of as you please, only never saying but they are your own, at least not hinting that they are mine. There was also a letter for you from John, containing, I dare say, nothing but expressions of the real goodwill he bears you, or an invitation to see him if you were in that neighbourhood. I do not send it, lest it should make this too large, and the travling charges immense, should it have to follow you to Nithsdale. Meantime, if you let me know by next post if anything prolong your stay in town so long that it could reach you there, and that Kerr is still there to take charge of a future letter for you, I will then write you all my Edr. commissions, send you John's letter and any thing else that strikes me in the head, rhyme or prose. I must undeceive you in one thing. I was not even acquaint with poor Mylne. I only read "Darthula,"[2] and wished to see him, but death stept between. You are the only poet good enough to allow me the name of your sincere friend, FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Postscript.—Yours has been a fortnight on the road. I cannot afford to save postage at such an expense again.

(1) Burns visited Edinburgh about the end of February to have a further "racking" of accounts with Creech, and, as afterwards appears (p. 157), to arrange about getting an Excise division. Mrs. Dunlop's letter of the 10th caught him there, and his reply, which follows here, is the only letter he is known to have dated from the capital during this visit.

(2) The title of Mylne's tragedy, previously noticed.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Stewarton.

EDIN. *Saturday Morning* [*23rd Feb.* 1789].

Your kind packet, my much esteemed friend, is just come to hand. In my hurried hours in this place I have not yet had time to peruse Mylne's verses, but I have three times o'er without interval perused your incomparable verses to your young lady. It is evident, My dear Madam, that you were deeply interested in the subject; as you have in these lines not only risen above yourself, but, upon the honor of a Man, and the skill of a Critic! you have risen above any thing of the kind done by any author now living. So soon as I return to Nithsdale, which will be in four or five days, I shall write a criticism on their merits.

I am here more unhappy than I ever experienced before in Edinburgh. I am a poor man of business, and I have got some very serious business to do; I love the social pleasures in moderation, but here I am impressed into the service of Bacchus; and I am *from home.*

But, truce with peevish, poor complaining! I will not tax your friendship with my weakness. Were it not for hurting your feelings, I would likewise add, that I will no more be thus indebted to your beneficence; but I checked a momentary pang of something like wounded pride, and taxed my ingenuity to assist your wishes. It oblidges me to let you into an intention of mine rather prematurely, but as it is the only way I can think of being oblidged by you, *in that manner*, I must tell it you. I hope to be a father again in about two or three months, and I had resolved and indeed had told Mrs. Burns, that the said child should be christened by the name of FRANCES DUNLOP, if a girl, or FRANCIS, etc., if a boy; that while the child should exist, it might be a witness of a Friendship to which I owe much of the pleasurable part of my life; a Friendship which I wish to hand down to my posterity as one of the honors of their Ancestor. Let this said Miss Frances or Mr. Francis be the object of your intended beneficence with all my soul. Perhaps in the case of a boy, you would rather wish to wait for one of your own sex, that might take the exact Name; and as I have not the smallest doubt of being very soon able to accommodate you in that way too, I shall expect your commands sometime before the important period.

I am here just in a vortex, so must conclude with a simple heartfelt *A Dieu je vous commende!* ROBT. BURNS.

I'll write you on my return home.

Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House, Stewarton.

ELLISLAND, *March 4th*, 1789.

Here am I, my honored Friend, returned safe from the Capital. To a man who has a HOME, however humble or remote; if that HOME is like mine, the scene of Domestic comfort; the bustle of Edinburgh will soon be a business of sickening disgust.

Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate you!

When I must sculk into a corner, lest the rattling equipage of some gaping blockhead, contemptible puppy, or detestable scoundrel should mangle me in the mire, I am tempted to exclaim —"What merits have these wretches had, or what demerits have I had, in some state of Pre-existence, that they are ushered into this state of being with the sceptre of rule and the key of riches in their puny fists; and I am kicked into the world, the sport of their folly or the victim of their pride?" I have read somewhere of a monarch, in Spain I think it was, who was so out of humour with the Ptolemean system of astronomy, that he said, had he been of the Creator's council he could have saved Him a great deal of labor and absurdity. I will not defend this blasphemous speech; but often as I have glided in humble stealth through the pomp of Princes' Street, it has suggested itself to me as an improvement on the present Human figure, that a man in proportion to his own conceit of his consequence in the world, could have pushed out the longitude of his common size, as a snail pushes out his horns, or as we draw out a perspective. This trifling alteration, not to mention the prodigious saving it would be in the tear and wear of the neck and limb-sinews of many of his Majesty's liege subjects in the way of tossing the head and tiptoe strutting, would evidently turn out a vast advantage in enabling us at once to adjust the ceremonials in making a bow or making way to a Great Man, and that too, within a second of the precise spherical angle of reverence or an inch of the particular point of respectful distance, which the important creature itself requires; as a measuring glance at its towering altitude would determine the affair like instinct.

You are right, Madam, in your idea of poor Mylne's poem which he has addressed to me. The piece has a good deal of merit, but it has one damning fault—it is by far too long. Besides, my success has encouraged such a shoal of ill-spawned monsters to crawl into public notice under the title of Scots Poets, that the very term, Scots Poetry, borders on the burlesque. When I write to Mr. Carfrae, I shall advise him rather to try one

of his deceased friend's English pieces. I am prodigiously hurried with my own matters, else I would have requested a perusal of all Mylne's poetic performances; and would have offered his friends my assistance in either selecting or correcting what would be proper for the Press. What it is that occupies me so much, and perhaps oppresses my present spirits, shall fill up a paragraph in some future letter. In the mean time, allow me to close this epistle with a few lines done by a friend of mine, which for beauty I shall put against any as many lines in our language. I give you them, that, as you have seen the original, you may guess whether one or two alterations I have ventured to make in them be any real improvement.

Like the fair plant that from our touch withdraws
Shrink, mildly fearful, even from applause:
Be all a Mother's fondest hopes can dream,
And all you are, my charming girl, seem.
Straight as the fox-glove, ere her bells disclose,
Mild as the maiden-blushing hawthorn blows,
Fair as the fairest of each lovely kind,
Your form shall be the image of your mind.
Your manners shall so true your soul express,
That all shall long to know the worth they guess;
Congenial hearts shall greet with kindred love,
And even sick'ning Envy must approve.[1]

I have the honor to be, Madam, your oblidged friend and humble servt. ROBT. BURNS.

(1) Mrs. Dunlop's "Address to a Young Lady" amended. See *antea*, p. 148.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS,
Ellisland, Dumfries.

DUNLOP, 18*th March* 1789.
[Franked by Kerr.]

Dear Sir—I cannot express the pleasure I always feel in discovering I am got two letters in your debt, nor do I know how to thank my good friend for an event so truly soothing to my pride. Believe me I most sincerely acknowledge this as amply compensating for a thousand mortifications it might be subjected to in my intercourse with those of the world I value less, and whose claims are built on very different foundations—different in the eyes of the world, and still more widely different in mine.

I knew not where to find you, in town or country, in peace or war, tuning your melodious reed, dropping *aqua fortis*, or whetting the sharp scythe of political *satire*[1]—a word my mild Muse does not even know how to spell, you see. I was afraid you

might be so strongly sucked into the vortex where you were as to stay longer than you planned or I wished. I could not write, but often thought of you, and in one of those reveries which fancy sometimes leads me into, my pen of itself scratched the inclosed verses and letter, almost without knowing it; perhaps I should have thrown both in the fire, but, as I told you formerly, "Unawed before the bard, the phantoms pass." You say I wounded your pride. I am sure I never intended to do so; nay, should I now probe that wound to the very quick, it would still be the cruel act of a friendly surgeon, who wished only to cure the patient, not torture the distemper; nay, loath would I be even it should expire under my hand, for I think in a moderate degree it is one of the best companions ever a poor man was blest or even sometimes curst with. But if you have no objection to consult Mr. Graham on the merits of this composition,[2] seal and send it; you have my free leave, though I am so much a stranger to your present plans that I durst not do so myself without consulting you; though your ideas of female delicacy will not be increast by my present communication, unless in this you are as truly superiour to the general run of the world as I have often esteemed you on other occasions, or, as Fate has often left you beneath your worst inferiours in fortune and in the estimation of fools. It is a cruel tax malevolence lays on talents to depreciate the moral character of those who incontestably possess them, and force one's friends, in resentment of underhand massacres, to repeat truths that speak plain enough themselves to all who are unprejudiced by malicious whisperers. Should such earwigs have crawled towards Fintry, I would like to brush them off. It was this train of thinking led me to write the inclosed, and the same motive may perhaps induce you to send it, spite of any objections pride may enter.

I delight in your fancyful cynic adieu to the metropolis, nor can any line even of yours give me more pleasure than the one that so naturally assures me of your finding home the scene of domestic comfort. You tell me you were prest into the service of Bacchus, and I suspect you have been on actual duty when you wrot; you say so much more than usual of my poor lines. Are you not afraid to make one snail put forth her horn to a ludicrous exaltation, since self-conceit is to be the moving spring? Yet I don't know but in time your correspondence may make me a shadow of a poet, for I feel I imbibe some of your graces, particularly that noble obstinacy that led you rather to leave poor Wallace wight *unhappy* for ever than yield one syllable to my criticism. After your good example I resolve to defend my last

couplet as preferable in its own place to your alteration. Perhaps yours might be more emphatical from a man to his mistress, but an old woman, speaking to her young ward, points out the single partner for life, not the vain idea of general admiration or divided love exprest in the first line, and in the last alludes in the word *envy* only to that desire of equalling by a laudable emulation or imitation the happy female we approve of. That envy whose malignity sickens at being forced to applaud is truly masculine, wholly unknown to the soul of the gentle pupil, and even only taught at second hand to the old monitress herself when time has stole away the softness of her sex. Read them a fourth time, and say, if truth will let you, that you are not then of my opinion, and if you would not think the mind more enchanting that aspired to the affection of those of her own sex who saw her please more than themselves, than hers who could rejoice in the hope of their sick'ning and pining with envy at those qualities to which they could not refuse their reluctant applause.

I dare not ask what is busying or troubling you, since you don't yet like to say. While we live in this world we must frequently share its distresses. I truly sympathise with yours, even without knowing what they are, nor am I free from my own at this moment. Indeed the mother of a score of children can seldom want cares or crosses, either in reality or imagination. In every situation, however, I must feel your friendship and esteem inexpressibly soothing ; nor can anything flatter my self-love more than the value you place on my correspondence and regard, when you intend me the name of your child in so kind and obliging a manner. Yet I must tell you you have made a miserable choise, for a sad worthless name it has proved to nineteen who have already worn it, and to whom it has never, as far as I remember, signified one single straw more than the name itself, which to be sure, as a name, might serve a Spanish guarda costa or a German prince. As I was baptized Frances Ann, and by law and custom obliged to call myself Agnew Dunlop, while vanity bids me remind you and myself I was a Wallace, yet, my dr. sir, if you know anybody the child might be the better of, it would be unjust to it, poor little innocent ! to load it with so much lumber, even should there be two again to bear the weight ; for you know I never deceived you from the first. We set out, like King Pharamond and his secretary, with no expectations from each other but those of speaking and hearing truth just in the first unstudied shape in which she presented herself to either pen, and I'm sure at least I have kept to the articles in always giving you the undisguised

thoughts of the minute, be what they would. But to leave this; how do you like the following simile?—

> The village damsels follow in a train,
> To pick the gleanings of the yellow grain;
> One maid distinguished in an azure vest
> Superiour shone, eclipsing all the rest.
> Amidst the barren, spritty grass below,
> Superiour rising to superiour woe.
> So the blue hare-bell oft is singly seen
> In robe unclouded deck th' uncultur'd green!
> Sweet solitary flower by Nature cast,
> Without a leaf to shield her from the blast,
> Bent by each breath, and trembling from the knell,
> And hence by peasants term'd the Dead Man's Bell.

I am sorry to see you have wrot out your foolscap. I wish you had kept a sheet for me. I assure you 'twas greatly adapted to my taste, and I regret the change. Meanwhile, the different size of this obliges me to bid you, I dare say, what you will think no premature adieu. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) She had made more than one attempt at the word, but really succeeded in the end.

(2) Mrs. Dunlop, who knew Graham of Fintry, one of the Commissioners of Excise, had written him on Burns's behalf, and also a set of verses, probably on the same theme.

The following letter shows that Burns had reached a state of mind almost approaching despair about his farm, long before his sweeping statement to Gilbert of January 1790, that "It is a ruinous affair on all hands." Here we have him, in March 1789, when he had not been a year in Ellisland, speaking of his farm as "a very, very hard bargain, if at all practicable." Yet, barely a couple of months before, on 3rd February, he wrote to Bishop Geddes that he had good hopes of the farm; while on 22nd January he had told Lady Betty Cunningham that he was pretty sure that it would do well in time, though for several years it would require more assistance than his pocket could afford. But Burns had of course moods about his farm as about many other things. Otherwise the letter throws fresh light on the procedure taken by the poet in order to procure regular occupation in the Excise. Besides racking accounts with Creech on his visit to Edinburgh in February, he had interviewed Mr. Graham of Fintry with a view to appointment to a division.

Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House, Stewarton.

ELLISLAND, 25*th March* 1789.

Dear Madam—I have this moment your kind packet of the 18th, and tho' sore tired with the labours of the day,

> . . . throwing the grain
> Into the faithful bosom of the ground,

yet, as I have a boy, my herd, going for Ayrshire to-morrow morning, and who will be at Kilmarnock, I shall make him go so much farther and leave this at Dunlop.

You have a little miscalculated my feelings, my honored friend, respecting the naming of my child. To name my child after any of the Great, with a view to their future beneficence, is quite foreign to my ideas: my motive is gratitude, not selfishness. Though I may die a very poor man, yet I hope my children shall ever boast the character of their Father; and as that father has some few in the upper ranks of life to whom he is peculiarly indebted, or whom he holds peculiarly dear, he wishes his children likewise to indulge an honest pride on that account; and not only as a memento of these honors their father enjoyed, but as an incentive to noble action, he will call his children after the names of his illustrious friends and benefactors. I intend, Madam, as first at my heart, to begin with your honored name; and my first child shall be Frances Wallace or F. Dunlop as you please, for really I dare not venture on the whole list of your appellations.

As for Mr. Graham's letter, Madam, it is of a piece with your usual goodness, and is what I highly approve of; only when I tell you the narrative of my situation, plans in life, etc., you will see the propriety of altering the scope of your epistle. The latter part indeed of that epistle is what in no situation I could think on: I have marked in the epistle itself, where that part begins.

You remember, Madam, I had two plans of life before me; the Excise and farming. I thought, by the glimmering of my own prudence, the Excise was my most eligible scheme; but all my Great friends, and particularly you, were decidedly, and therefore decided me, for farming. My master, Mr. Miller, out of real tho' mistaken benevolence, sought me industriously out, to set me this farm, as he said to give me a lease that would make me comfortable and easy. I was a stranger to [the] country, the farm and the soil, and so ventured on a bargain, that instead of being comfortable, is and will be a very, very hard bargain, if at all practicable. I am sorry to tell you this, Madam, but it is a

damning truth; though I beg, as the world think that I have got a pennyworth of a farm, you will not undeceive them. To bring myself about, I thought of getting an Excise Division in the midst of which I live, and this was what took me last to Edinburgh; but there are in the Excise-Board certain regulations which, notwithstanding Mr. Graham's warmest exertions, baffled all my hopes. By Mr. Creech, who has at last settled amicably and fully as fairly as could have been expected, with me, I clear about £440 or £450.[1] To keep my brother from ruin, and scattering my aged parent and three sisters comfortless in the world, I advanced him about £200 of that money: this you know was an indispensible affair, as their wellbeing is certainly to me the same as my own. What money rests for myself, you will guess is too little for my own stock; but my Master allows me some money to build and inclose, and with that I could have done—if the farm would have done.

But to close this tedious epistle, and to give you something more comfortable in my views; my brother's lease is near expiring, he may be able to live by my lease, as he can with propriety do things that I *now* can not do; I will plant him in this farm and throw myself on the Excise at large, where I am sure of immediate and constant bread.

Let these matters lie between you and I only.

As for your writing Mr. Graham, it is what pleases me above all things; but no plans in it if you please; I wish him to know how I labour under a sense of his goodness, and, if you will, your thanks to him for his kindness to a man in whose welfare you have interested yourself: and if you give them a little different turn, now that you know my situation, send the verses above all things.

Now I talk of verses, I own your criticism on my emendation of your line to be just; but one thing, Madam, has escaped your attention. "Envy," either a noun or verb, is accented on the first syllable, consequently the word cannot well close your line.

Forgive this miserable scrawl.—I have the honor to be, Madam, your oblidged friend and very humble servt.

ROBT. BURNS.

If you write Mr. Graham, his address is, George Street, Edinr. I must not seem to know any thing of the matter, so let it just go by the nearest Post-Office. R. B.

(1) This is not inconsistent with the poet's letter to Dr. Moore of 4th January, in which he said he believed he should

clear about £400 some little odds, including the result of the settlement still pending, and it can be made to agree with Currie's statement that the whole profits of the edition were £500.

From the letter that follows we learn for the first time that Robert Burns might, had his inclination and the good will of a patron chimed in, have been a professor in the University of Edinburgh. Mrs. Dunlop pressed him hard to become an applicant for the new chair, the foundation of which is related below, and through her and Dr. Moore his name was brought before the patron. It does not, however, appear that the poet ever seriously thought of applying for the post. He at first doubted the feasibility of the project, and finally in July expressed his obligation to his two friends for their exertions on his behalf, but said that he knew the professorship was to him an unattainable object.

Ad. Mr. Robt. Burns,
Ellisland, Dumfries.

1*st April* 1789.
[Franked by Kerr.]

Dr. Sir—Your boy called here one morning before I was well out of bed. I, however, regretted not seeing him the less as Will Mure told me he was not directly returning, and my knowing I could send my letter post-free hindered me from being very earnest about writing by him; so I did not detain him, understanding he had some little business in the neighbourhood. Indeed I should have been vext to think he had walked from Kilmarnock with a letter which I should have had next day by post at any rate. It was making the poor boy pay too dear for my pleasure; yet when I saw how much it contained of your private concerns, I less grudged his walk. Assure yourself I shall not mention what you tell me, or broach any plan that can hurt you either in interest or happiness, by hinting it to any body but yourself. As for forming schemes, it is a kind of castle-building that I cannot resign, as it pleases myself and does little harm to any thing else. I am, however, truly vext to think I have ever given my opinion where you don't find it answer either your ideas or mine. However, remember it was respectability, not wealth, was my object; and my sentiments are still the same spite of the event. Yet I own my feeling is painful, and something similar to that of having a child die of the inoculation. I

mourn both, but repent neither. Providence always sends some consolation; where do you believe I find it at present? Just in the very circumstance that ought to grieve me most, in the pride of knowing any opinion of mine could for a moment influence your superiour judgement. I feel pleased even at the very time when I discover my advice has been unfortunate, a sure proof generosity is not the strongest point of my character, tho' 'tis the first time I ever found out or suspected it was vanity. I can hardly still think it so; I rather impute it to the pleasure of esteeming you now more than I could ever have done had you at once plunged eagerly into a profession where, although I must follow an old friend, I could never have thought of looking for a new one. The very thing you suggest about your brother struck me before, and I one day mentioned it in the idea of instability and want of application being frequently too close companions of genius. The gentleman to whom I was speaking replied—How could I think of that? If the bargain was a good one, conferred as a personal favour, was it generous to assume a right of transferring it to one for whom it was never meant? If it was bad, 'twas unjust and inhuman to throw it on a friend. I made no answer. I leave it to your animadversions to fix a proper one, as I know no mind more decisive or more manly in its determinations. Do not think I ever miscalculate your motives in any thing. I always refer them to the very best native workings of a good heart and a sound, uncorrupted understanding. If I ever under-rate them, it is for want of sublimity in myself to reach the height to which your eagle fancy may soar. I may sometimes, notwithstanding, blame, or at least differ from your way of thinking, and reprobate it as romantically disinterested, but never as sordid or mean. I am incapable of misconstruing the compliment you pay me, tho' I would even sacrifice it rather than hurt the little one, if by this resignation it might gain a better friend than it can ever hope in me. I am sorry when you bid me chuse, to quit the appellation of my husband; yet I think the son of a Poet must be Wallace. You will remember it is long since I told you you would make that name live five hundred years longer, tho' I am sure I did not dream of this method of bringing it about, which confers an honour upon me beyond my expectation or desert, but of which I feel the full value. I cannot allow you to speak of gratitude, unless you mean on my side, who have ever been the obliged party. You have allowed me to engross a portion of your time and attention that was material to me and to yourself by an intercourse which tended to rouse my then vacant

mind, flatter my self-love, and always afford me a lively pleasure. You have indulged me in scribbling long letters, and knowing you would answer them, as if the correspondence had been as great an acquisition to you as I found it to myself; and this at a time when your more knowing friends were telling you it was a loss, and that all private letters were waste of genius and trifling ones inexcusable in those who were courted by wealth, rank, or science from every corner, and ought to be taken up with nothing but their advancement in fame or fortune. You have stuck by me spite of all these wise arguments, and placed me at the head of your list of distinguished friends in preference to so many proud pre-eminencies that you have taught me a value I never before put upon precedency. For the little while I have to live I trust I shall never be shoved out of the post of honour to which you direct my ambition. Were my lease long enough, I should fear to see you rich enough to go to London, that thick atmosphere which choaks most unprofitable regards. But I forgot that I meant to bid you read your friend Creech's advertisement in the *Edr. Courant* for proposals about a professor of Agriculture.[1] I would have you give this a little serious attention, since I do not believe there is a man in the kingdom who might so properly blend the theoretical and practical knowledge that plan would seem to require, and the proposal being to be sent marked with a private motto and kept secret if desired, seemed to me a tempting circumstance, should the situation on inquiry prove convenient, reputable, and such as might be held for life or dropt as one afterwards found eligible should they please the donor, which there appeared no great risk in trying. Besides, Edina would not be so irksome when one was not from home there, nor would a grave member of the College be so oft the prey of jolly Bacchus as an Exciseman, at least against his will. But if you write for any competition which you would have unknown, don't correct a single letter with your own hand; 'tis as remarkable as the awns [beard] of a barleycorn; I also ought to have told you that I lately saw your brother's landlord, the Nabob.[2] I said I wondered he had quit you for a tenant. He said he had kept a much better man for his purpose; your brother was a much better farmer, one he would really be sorry to lose, and who had ten times the sense of you. I don't repeat this as chit-chat, but to induce you to examine how the land lies there before you fix on the transplantation purposed. I wish to God somebody that could serve your interest thought of it half as often as I do. A poet is a Proteus which shows himself in every shape. A

farmer's house, a newspaper advertisement, a book, a song, a tree, a river, or a mountain, bring you along with them to my imagination, and becomes itself more interesting from being so accompanyed. I must believe you my friend, now that you tell me my faults, therefore hear them with more grateful pleasure than my praise, and since I must not quote Shakspear's *All's Well that Ends Well* in my favours, I avail myself of Broome's [3]—

> One line for sense and one for rhyme,
> For any man's sufficient at a time.

Being convicted I plead total ignorance of English law with regard to accent and every part of grammar, nor can I claim the privileges you and others would be allowed, being no licence as a poet. I must just stand condemn'd as a poacher unless you allow of this alteration in my poor tortured couplet.

> Congenial minds their partner shall approve,
> Nor ladies envy her they truly love.

Adieu. I have not room for my name; perhaps by now you have it at home in the first edition. In every one believe it that of a friend, with additions and emendations, the growth of every month of our acquaintance. Will the accommodation [4] stop the *Poet's Progress?* I hope not, for I am interested in every step of his road that I have yet seen. I am less friendly to the *Epistle* of the *Unfortunate Lady*,[5] who writes very like a man and he no small proficient either. But my family is too large just now for me to turn critic. So in honest Erse *Dieu vous benisse!*

(1) Mr. William Johnstone Pulteney, afterwards baronet of Westerhall by succession to his brother, who had acquired the vast fortune of the Pulteney family by his marriage with the heiress of Daniel, presented to the University of Edinburgh, through the Town Council, of which Creech was a member, the sum of £1250 to endow a Chair of Agriculture. Pulteney retained the first presentation in his own hands, and appointed in the year 1790 Dr. Andrew Coventry of Shanwell, who filled the chair for a great many years. By the terms of the appointment he was taken bound to deliver "a set of Instructions or Lectures on the subject of Agriculture, respecting the nature of soils and manures; the modes of cultivation; the succession of crops; the construction of the implements of husbandry; the best and most

successful known practices; the manner of instituting experiments to ascertain the effect of any proposed practice in any soil or climate; and the best manner of introducing or training skilful labourers and country artificers, where these may be wanting."

(2) Mossgiel, which the Burnses leased from Gavin Hamilton, as factor for the Earl of Loudoun, passed in 1786 into the possession of the neighbouring proprietor, Claud Alexander of Ballochmyle, father of "The Bonie Lass," who had made a fortune in India, and in the slang of the day was therefore a nabob.

(3) William Broome (1689-1745), Pope's collaborator in the translation of Homer.

> Hibernian politics, O Swift! thy doom,
> And Pope's, translating ten whole years with Broome.
>
> *Dunciad.*

(4) The final payment by Creech in connection with the 1787 edition.

(5) The sketch (see *antea*, p. 144) afterwards incorporated in "Passion's Cry."

About this time Burns commenced his connection with the recently started first London evening paper, Peter Stuart's, *The Star and Evening Advertiser*, which took from him the "Ode to the Departed Regency Bill," then the "Ode to the Memory of Mrs. Oswald of Auchencruive," the "New Psalmody" for Kilmarnock Chapel, etc. It will be noted that from the start the poet appreciated the risk he ran in mixing himself up with politics. The Regency Bill was of course introduced by Pitt, on George the Third's first attack of madness, conferring the regency on the Prince of Wales with certain restrictions which were denounced by Fox and the Prince's friends.

Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House, Stewarton.

ELLISLAND, *3rd April* 1789.

Dear Madam—I have this moment finished the following political Squib, and I cannot resist the temptation of sending you a copy of it—the only copy indeed that I will send to any body, except perhaps anonymously to some London Newspaper. Politics is dangerous ground for me to tread on, and yet I cannot for the soul of me resist an impulse of any thing like Wit.

ODE TO THE DEPARTED REGENCY BILL

Daughter of Chaos' doting years !
Nurse of ten thousand hopes and fears !
Whether thy airy, unsubstantial shade
(The rites of sepulture now duly paid ;)
Spread abroad its hideous form
On the roaring civil-storm ;
Deafening din, and warring rage,
Factions wild with factions wage :
Or under ground, deep-sunk, profound,
Among the demons of the earth,
With groans that make the mountains shake,
Thou mourn thy ill-starred, blighted birth :

Or in the uncreated void,
Where seeds of FUTURE-BEING fight,
With lightened step thou wander wide,
To greet thy mother ANCIENT NIGHT ;
And as each jarring, monster mass is past,
Fond recollect what once thou wast :
In manner due, beneath this sacred oak,
Hear, Spirit, hear ! thy presence I invoke !

By a Monarch's heaven-struck fate !
By a disunited State !
By a GENEROUS PRINCE'S wrongs !
By a Senate's war of tongues !
By Opposition's eager hand,
Grasping at an airy wand !
By a PREMIER'S sullen pride,
Louring on the changing tide !
By dread Th-rl-w's powers to awe,
Rhetoric, Blasph-my, and Law !
By the turbulent ocean,
A Nation's commotion !
By the harlot caresses
Of Borough Addresses !
By days few and evil !
Thy portion, poor devil !
By Power, Wealth, Show ! the gods by men adored :
By NAMELESS POVERTY ! their hell abhorred :
By all they hope ! By all they fear !
HEAR ! AND APPEAR !
Stare not on me, thou ghostly Power !
Nor grim with chained defiance lour !
No Babel-structure would I build,
Where, Order exiled from his regal sway,
Confusion may the REGENT SCEPTRE wield,
While all would rule—and none obey.—
Go ! to the world of MAN relate
The story of thy strange, eventful fate :

And call presumptuous Hope to hear,
And bid him check his blind career;
And tell the sore-vexed sons of Care,
Never, never to despair!
Paint CHARLES's speed, on wings of fire,
The object of his fond desire
Beyond his boldest hopes at hand:
Paint all the triumph of the PRTL-ND-BAND;
Mark, how they seem to lift th' elated voice!
And who are these that in their joy rejoice?
Jews, Gentiles, what a motely crew!
Their iron tears of joy their flinty cheeks bedew;
See, how unfurled their parchment ensigns fly,
And, PRINCIPAL and INTEREST! all the cry.—
But just as hopes to warm enjoyment rise,
Cry, CONVALESCENCE! and the vision flies.—
Then next pourtray a darkening, twilight gloom,
Eclipsing, sad, a gay rejoicing morn,
While proud AMBITION to th' untimely tomb
By gnashing, grim, despairing fiends is borne!
Paint RUIN, in the shape of high DUND——
Gaping with giddy terror o'er the brow:
In vain he struggles—the Fates behind him press,
And clamorous hell yawns for her prey below!
How fallen That, whose pride late scaled the skies!!!
And This, like Lucifer, no more to rise!!!

Again pronounce the powerful word:
See Day, triumphant from the night, restored.

Then know these truths, ye sons of men
(Thus end thy MORAL TALE).
Your darkest terrors may be vain,
Your brightest hopes may fail.

I have this moment an opportunity of sending this to Post, so can no more—not even review the past. R. B.

In the collection of Mr. R. B. Adam of Buffalo, there is a MS. of this poem dated 17th March 1789. The Ode was published in the London *Star* of 17th April, dated Edinburgh the 7th, and signed "Agricola." Burns told Lady Harriet Don that it was "mangled in a newspaper." Probably Stuart, the editor, struck out of the MS. sent him lines 59-62, "Jews, Gentiles," etc., modified the two preceding lines to cover the omission, and made verbal changes in lines 53 and 56. In the copy made for Captain Riddel lines 25 and 26 were omitted.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House, Stewarton.

ELLISLAND, 21*st April* 1789.

My honored friend—If you knew my present hurry of building, planning, planting, ploughing, sowing, etc. etc., you would give me great credit for this sheet-ful, if I live in leisure to fill it. Every minute has five minutes' business to do, and every crown has a twenty-shilling errand to run. I have just got a reading of some books I wanted much; and a parcel of poems, now in the current of subscription, have given me, and daily give me, a world of trouble in revising them. They are hopeless trash; but the authoress is a poor young creature whose forefathers have seen better days; for which consideration I submit to the horrid drudgery. I have over and above, the 3d vol. of the Scots Songs [*Museum*] among my hands, among which will appear some delectable pieces of my Muse's dreams.

Two mornings ago as I was, at a very early hour, sowing in the fields, I heard a shot, and presently a poor little hare limped by me, apparently very much hurt. You will easily guess, this set my humanity in tears and my indignation in arms. The following was the result, which please read to the young ladies—I believe you may include the Major, too; as whatever I have said of shooting hares, I have not spoken one irreverend word against coursing them. This is, according to your just right, the very first copy I wrote.

ON SEEING A FELLOW WOUND A HARE WITH A SHOT[1]

Inhuman man! curse on thy barbarous art,
And blasted be thy murder-aiming eye!
May never Pity soothe thee with a sigh,
Nor ever Pleasure glad thy cruel heart!

Go live, poor wanderer of the wood and field,
The bitter little that of life remains:
No more the thickening brakes or verdant plains
To thee, or home, or food, or pastime yield.

Seek, mangled innocent, some wonted form;
That wonted form, alas! thy dying bed,
The sheltering rushes whistling o'er thy head,
The cold earth with thy blood-stained bosom warm.

Perhaps a mother's anguish adds its woe,
The playful Pair croud fondly by thy side;
Ah, little Nurslings! who will now provide
That life, a Mother only can bestow!

Oft as by winding Nith I, musing, wait
The sober eve, or hail the chearful dawn,
I'll miss thee sporting o'er the dewy lawn,
And curse the ruthless wretch, and mourn thy hapless fate.

It would truly oblidge me, to have your opinion of the foregoing. I must take some other opportunity to answer the particulars of your last. I believe the Professorship you mention will be an idle project; but whatever it may be, I, or such as I, am quite out of the question.

You are rather premature on me in expecting your name-child so soon. In about two months, I hope to tell you another story. By the way, should I have a boy, will you honor him with the appellation, or will you wait a girl? You see, I am set in for trade. I wish I had lived of Joktan,[2] in whose days, says Moses, the earth was divided. Then, a partriarchal fellow like me might have been the father of a nation.

But even in that case I should have been a loser if I had then been denied the happiness and honor of subscribing myself, Dr. Madam, your oblidged friend and humble servt.

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) The draft in the letter of 4th May to Alexander Cunningham is the earliest hitherto known. Both it and the version in the text of course differ in several places from, and have one verse more than the poem as it was adjusted to Dr. Gregory's criticism.

(2) Joktan was of the children of Shem, and begot thirteen sons. See Gen. x. 25.

To BURNS.

23rd April 1789.

Dr. Sir—This is the feast or fast for the recovery of our King.[1] I say with all my heart—Thy will be done! For on this subject I have no will of my own; my very wishes are lost in immensity or buried in profound ignorance, and I am ready with the implicit faith of indifference to believe what is is best. But I am not well; my spirits are contracted, and everything around me on too large a scale for my present enjoyment. My house is so big I can see but one end of it; my company so numerous I can hear none of them for the noise of the rest; my very devotion, inadequate to the occasion, embraces only a very few friends, for whom indeed my sincere good wishes never fail to arise with the dawning light, and to contribute to their accomplishment would

be all the Heaven I would ask upon earth. Yet it is more than I fear will ever be granted me, nor can I learn to be contented without it, and perform that first of all duties to fill quietly our appointed post, and never let will-o'-the-wisp wishes tempt us to repine at what we cannot better but may often mar by those indifferent efforts which jostle us out of the ranks and hurt both our cause and ourselves. This length mortified pride had made me peevish; I expected a letter and missed it. I dare say I found much better, for I have just got yours, and will forget every thing disagreeable for that which always gives me pleasure. My soul, before as inanimate as this drizzly day, brightens to a gleam of sunshine, and, if not reason, recollection and rhyme may once more befriend me, and fill up my blank sheet as well as my void intellects, which were wholly asleep till roused by the welcome sight of your hand—the only one almost that never fails for some minutes at least to brush off the dust and cobwebs gathered round an indolent, inactive mind, good for nothing to others or itself. This were an overwhelming idea, but your friendship gives the lie to it, and tells me I am still something, since I possess what the proudest of the land in vain may envy. I shall do what few Nabobs can, feel truly happy in my wealth, without examining too curiously whether I owe it to conquest, or if it constitute the only remaining inheritance from my ancestors. The last would please my vanity; the first gratify my self-love. Meantime I find food for both in the compliment Dr. Moore and you pay me in naming your sons for me, especially yours, where the surname makes it unequivocal, and there being no relation to prompt the distinction must make me regard it as the more peculiar mark of goodwill, and of that degree of esteem I dare not flatter myself I can ever deserve, unless by feeling the true value of it, which I beg you may give me full credit for.

I am assured the professorship is unappropriated, even in idea. It is endowed by Mr. Poultney. I wish to God he thought of both you and it as I do, and it would be yours, at least if you wish it should be so; but perhaps you would have an aversion to it. We are subject sometimes to strange dislikes. I know a friend of yours who feels always something come over her heart like the cold fit of an ague every time she thinks of a pert Exciseman, nor is this an inexplicable matter to me, for I have a kind of antipathy myself at cats, so that there is only one of the whole race I can endure. She indeed is a fine little creature, and quite a favourite; she cannot cry, and is the very reverse of the rest of the species. But you know it has long been said "No rule with-

out an exception," and I must confess I have seen already more than one among Excisemen who, like modest Irishmen, were always wondered at, and almost regarded like the good Bishop of Marseilles, who had escaped all the contagion of the plague. You bid me tell you my opinion of the "Hare." It was thrice read in the circle, and more liked every time than the first. Had it been any hand but yours, I don't know if I had done it so much justice, for I don't like the measure, which to my ears feels cramp and unnatural, and prevents my following the thought smoothly. I feel as Sterne did driving hard on rough road, I think when he left Maria or the dead ass; I don't know which, but it would do for either. The thoughts are beautifully tender, spite of your cursing as heartily as a Jewish judge when all the people said Amen. But what struck me most was "Go live the bitter little that of life remains," etc. The whole recalled the remembrance of a dead seal-fish I once saw with two young ones sucking, and I tryed to throw my fancy into the very form that I felt murder your's, so natural it is to imitate or rather be imperceptibly led by those we admire, even where we admire them least. This was the produce :—

No agonies now rend thy bursting heart,
  Thy lifeless young fix't at the ebbing flood;
  Cold death coagulates thy milk and blood,
Convulsive starts no longer pangs impart.

So petrified by pride to Parian stone
  On some mock marble sculptur'd orphans show,
  Meagre and cold! that vain parade of woe
Swells not the heart like simple Nature's groan.

I wonder at the ease (impudence I fear any body else would call it) with which I scribble all my nonsense to you, as a child would scratch mathematical schemes to Sir Isaak Newton, had it happened to find a bit of chalk on his desk. Sir Isaak was a good man, and would have set all soon to rights again with his pocket-handkerchief; so may you by lighting your pipe—should you ever have the toothach as I have had this month bypast—with my verses; for remember I positively prohibit your giving them to the maid to make broaches, or any of those kind of uses that would subject me to be laughed at by any body but yourself. Meantime I wish our convicts at Botany Bay may trade to the same purpose, and get valuable commodities for their iron nails, glass beads, etc. etc., as I do when you send me your compositions in exchange—nay, not only copies, but the proof-prints new from the mint, what money can never henceforth buy, and even tell

me you think these my just right. I wish from the bottom of my soul you may ever find a friend worthy of your gratitude, for it surely would be extreme when you repay me so richly for, I dare say, often trying your patience, and exhausting it too, while I was really indulging myself more than I had it in my power to do in any other way whatever. When you read this, don't lower like the Premier o'er the "changing tide"[2]—a beautiful, fine image as I see it reflected in the clear mirror of my ruling star, for such I greet the new poetic constellation which may perhaps hereafter be called, like the one in the heavens, the "something Georgius" [*Georgium Sidus*], though I believe the Cuer-Carw would have been more proper; apropos to which, in some lines you saw lately I intended writing, after giving "every Stuart his due,"[3] by way of an additional cause for doing so, this couplet—

> E'er since in early youth (unknown) he trode
> With worth and learning Catrine's loved abode.

Apropos to which again I must tell you I lately met a fine young fellow, clever, well-principled, good-hearted, and proudly independent of spirit, but the world says mad, and I am not sure if they are wholly mistaken. He did something out of the common road, and I gave him your "Epitaph of a Bard" to read. He was so pleased with it I made him a present of the book. He said he was ashamed to see but one of his name among the subscriptions. "I suppose yours will grace his next publication," replied I. Says he, "I had an old grand-uncle, who told great lies, not to be believed but laughed at. He told us one day Old George was not dead nor planting cabbage at Hanover. Where was he then? 'One day,' says he, 'I was marching our Regt. (Scots Dutch) to the parade at the Hague. A fellow called me from a gin-shop. I did not chuse the men should see I could drink, but when they dismist I returned to the little, fat, red-faced landlord, and asked how he knew me. "Lord Arthur," says he, "don't you know George Guelph? I keep this gin-shop; it's a hundred times better than to be King; won't you give me your custome?" "Shake hands," says I; "you're a d—d honest fellow—I'll not only come myself, but I'll fetch the whole regt."' "And I," added my guest, "will not only subscribe myself, but fetch my whole clan, and a pretty numerous one they are." We had some more chat about you, and it was he told me about the professorship being unengaged, so after the company parted it run in my head, and I wrot what you shall have in another sheet as if addrest to Creech.

(1) Thursday, 23rd April, was appointed a day of public thanksgiving for the recovery of George the Third from the mental derangement which was the origin of the Regency Bill. This same occasion was the subject of Burns's "Stanzas of Psalmody," published in the *Star*, and beginning, "O, sing a New Song to the Lord."

(2) "Ode to the Departed Regency Bill."

(3) This cryptic allusion is to Professor Dugald Stewart.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS,
Ellisland, Dumfries.

[*April* 1789.]
[Franked by Kerr.]

FRAGMENT

See these subscriptions; view the ample scroll!
Like Death's mixt legends that contain the whole.
What mighty hands from distant lands unfurled,
Seem to announce him Laureate for the World!
Sated with conquest, tired of public view,
His independent hand now grasps the plough.
. . . . . .

This is a very late spring, but spite of the cold the daisies begin to rise; yet my hopes of seeing you are not blooming. I rather almost despair of ever having that pleasure again; yet, as you once told me you meant to be in Ayrshire about this time, it would have vext me to leave it, which I was greatly importuned to do, two days ago, when two of my daughters went for some weeks to Edinburgh. Should you arrive, you would just find me at the old trade making another grandchild's cap. I suppose you won't, however, leave Mrs. Burns till the strangers are introduced, and she well again. You ask if I am for a son or a daughter. I shall be thankful, as the saying is, for whatever God sends, nor say, like the greedy Bishop of Bath and Wells—"Baith's best." I hear Dr. Moore is publishing a novel, but I don't know the name or nature of it. I am also told he is printing a tragedy—I mean a play—for I don't know what kind of one it is neither. A man is lost at London, at least much lost; to me it has been a fatal whirlpool, that has sucked in several of my friends who now inhabit about Westminster Abbey. But what is as bad, those who escape that are so crowded one is squeezed out of their head, tho' I ought not to say so of the Dr., who never in his life has forgot me where he could serve, though frequently when he might have pleased me much by his remembrance. Dr. Burns, if you have, as I hope you have, my happiness much at heart, just

reverse this mode, for my spirit, proud and independent like your own, leads me to prefer being pleased and flattered to the most material service I could receive. Happy is it for me if this is also your way of thinking, since it is my pride that I have been hitherto enabled sometimes to please you, whereas, with all the wish in the world, it is beyond my most sanguine hope that it should ever be in my power to be of the most insignificant service to you. Every body would know your "Regency Bill" were it to appear. You cannot have a child more like the father, should you have twins every year as long as you live. I am, notwithstanding the length of this, almost as busie as you, but my labours afford less pleasant variety. I might be sick-nurse in some hospital, for all my family almost are sick. I am the best myself, being only distracted with the toochach two hours every forenoon, and pretty well for the rest of the day. I dare not complain much lest they tell me 'tis a common affectation in old women, who would fain pretend to have teeth after they are all gone. Farewell. May you escape this and all evils, and always honour with your regard, Dr. Sir, your obliged, humble servt.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

The "New Psalm for the Chapel of Kilmarnock," which forms the first of the poetical transcripts in the following letter, was published in the *Star* on 14th May, with the date Kilmarnock, 30th April. Duncan M'Leerie was the hero of an old Kilmarnock song.

To MRS. DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, *4th May* 1789.

You see, Madam, that I am returned to my folio epistles again. I no sooner hit on any poetic plan or fancy but I wish to send it to you; and if knowing and reading them gives half the pleasure to you, that communicating them to you gives to me, I am satisfied.

As I am not devoutly attached to a certain monarch, I cannot say that my heart ran any risk of bursting, on Thursday was se'ennight,[1] with the struggling emotions of gratitude. God forgive me for speaking evil of dignities! but I must say that I look on the whole business as a solemn farce of flagrant mummery. The following are a few stanzas of new Psalmody for that "joyful solemnity," which I sent to a London newspaper with the date and preface following.

Kilmarnock, 25th April. Mr. Printer,—In a certain chapel, not fifty miles from the market-cross of this good town, the following stanzas of Psalmody, it is said, were composed for, and devoutly sung on the late joyful solemnity of the 23rd.

O, sing a new song to the Lord!
Make, all and every one
A joyful noise, ev'n for the King
His restoration.

The sons of Belial in the land
Did set their heads together;
"Come, let us sweep them off," said they,
"Like an o'erflowing river."

They set their heads together, I say,
They set their heads together:
On right and left, and every hand,
We saw none to deliver.

Thou madest strong two chosen ones,
To quell the Wicked's pride:
The Young Man,[2] great in Issachar,
The burden-bearing tribe;

And him, among the Princes, chief
In our Jerusalem,
The Judge[3] that's mighty in Thy law,
The man that fears Thy name.

Yet they, even they, with all their strength,
Began to faint and fail;
Even as two howling, rav'ning wolves
To dogs do turn their tail.

Th' ungodly o'er the just prevail'd,
For so Thou hadst appointed,
That Thou might'st greater glory give
Unto Thine own annointed.

And now Thou hast restored our State,
Pity our Kirk also,
For she by tribulations
Is now brought very low!

Consume that high-place, PATRONAGE,
From off Thy holy hill;
And in Thy fury burn the book[4]
Even of that man M'Gill.

Now hear our prayer, accept our song,
And fight Thy chosen's battle!
We seek but little, Lord, from Thee,
Thou kens we get as little!

DUNCAN M'LEERIE.

So much for psalmody. You must know that the publisher of one of the most blasphemous party London newspapers is an acquaintance of mine, and as I am a little tinctured with Buff and Blue myself, I now and then help him to a stanza.

I gave another poetic whim in my head, which I at present dedicate, or rather inscribe, to the Rt. Honble. Ch. J. Fox, Esquire; but how long that fancy may hold, I can't say. A few of the first lines I have just rough sketched as follows:—

SKETCH

Inscribed to Charles James Fox, Esq.

How Wisdom and Folly meet, mix, and unite;
How Virtue and Vice blend their black and their white;
How Genius, th' illustrious father of fiction,
Confounds rule and law, reconciles contradiction,
I sing. If these mortals, the critics, should bustle,
I care not, not I: let the critics go whistle!

But now for a Patron, whose name and whose glory
At once may illustrate and honor my story.

Thou first of our orators, first of our wits,
Yet whose parts and acquirements seem mere lucky hits;
With knowledge so vast and with judgment so strong,
No man with the half of 'em e'er went far wrong;
With passions so potent and fancies so bright,
No man with the half of 'em e'er could go right;
A sorry, poor, misbegot son of the Muses,
For using thy name, offers fifty excuses.

Good L—d, what is Man! for as simple he looks,
Do but try to develop his hooks and his crooks!
With his depths and his shallows, his good and his evil,
All in all he's a problem must puzzle the devil.

On his one ruling passion Sir Pope[5] hugely labors,
That, like th' old Hebrew walking-switch, eats up its neighbours.

Human Nature's his show-box—your friend, would you know him?
Pull the string, Ruling Passion—the picture will show him.
What pity, in rearing so beauteous a system,
One trifling particular—Truth—should have miss'd him!
For, spite of his fine theoretic positions,
Mankind is a science defies definitions.

Some sort all our qualities each to its tribe,
And think Human Nature they truly describe:
Have you found this or t'other? there's more in the wind,
As by one drunken fellow his comrades you'll find.
But such is the flaw, or the depth of the plan
In the make of that wonderful creature called Man;

No two virtues, whatever relation they claim,
Nor even two different shades of the same,
Though like as was ever twin brother to brother,
Possessing the one shall imply you've the other.

But truce with abstraction, and truce with a Muse
Whose rhymes you'll perhaps, Sir, ne'er deign to peruse:
Will you leave your justings, your jars, and your quarrels,
Contending with Billy[6] for proud-nodding laurels?
My much-honor'd Patron, believe your poor Poet,
Your courage much more than your prudence, you show it;
In vain with Squire Billy for laurels you struggle:
He'll have them by fair trade—if not, he will smuggle;
Not cabinets even of kings would conceal 'em,
He'd up the back-stairs, and by G—— he would steal 'em!
Then feats like Squire Billy's, you ne'er can achieve 'em,
It is not, out-do him—the task is, out-thieve him!

I beg your pardon for troubling you with the enclosed to the Major's tenant before the gate; it is to request him to look me out two milk cows: one is for myself and another for Captain Riddel of Glenriddel, a very obliging neighbour of mine. John very obligingly offered to do so for me; and I will either serve myself that way or at Mauchline Fair. It happens on the 20th curt., and the Sunday preceding it I hope to have the honor of assuring you in person how sincerely I am, Madam, your highly obliged and most obedient humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) See *antea*, page 170.

(2) William Pitt.

(3) Lord Chancellor Thurlow. Pitt and Thurlow had opposed the appointment of a regent armed with all the powers of a king.

(4) Dr. William M'Gill's *Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ.*

(5) Pope's *Essay on Man.*

(6) Pitt.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS,
Elliesland, Dumfries.

[DUNLOP, *May*, 1789.]
[Franked by Kerr.]

Dr. Sir—I don't know how to account for it that, spite of your being part of two days here,[1] I never mentioned several things I wished much to talk of, and those we did speak about in so cursory a way I might as well have let them alone. Indeed you seemed just in the same style, since what you told me of your business for your brother was one of these half-confidences which

is always either too little or too much. I did not think myself at liberty to ask any question farther than you chose to communicate, especially as the rest of the company might have accidentally shared the information only meant for myself; yet you cannot believe I was wholly void of curiosity. Believe me, I wish the prosperity of all your family, wherever it can be attained without any slur on that rectitude of your own character in which your supereminence has hitherto shone even more bright than genius alone can possibly reach to. There are plans in life where the gain is so great on one side and the sacrifice so high on the other that the guilt becomes greater and the distress more lasting than robbery or even murder might occasion. No merit in a man can plead pardon for the woman who breaks over that pale which a distinction of ranks has affixt in society. Unless he has made his native superiority plain to the world, it can never with propriety come under her notice. Her motives must therefore be debasing to her, and her conduct disgraceful to her friends. She must forfeit their esteem, renounce their affection, and plunge a dagger in their heart deeper than her death could do. Nor will one so little tied to the decencies of female duties probably ever make a tolerable wife in other respects, even should she be able to bend to a reduced situation, embittered by remembrance of what she has thrown away herself, and of the joy and comfort of which she has deprived those to whom her figure in life was a real and inestimable property, or perhaps a devolved trust dearer than life itself. You observe there are many things your brother can do on a farm which you cannot now do; there are likewise many women might have married you who would become justly contemptible by marrying him, even allowing him to be, as Mr. Alexander says he is, the preferable man of the two. Many matches you might have embraced which in him would be very ungenerous, and taking a mean, unmanly advantage of folly or affection. In these cases the principle is, however, less blameable than the cool, unimpetuous accessory. For all which reasons I trust you will never be seen assistant to any plan where there is great disparity in anything but cash, unless the man has acquired *éclat* like your own, or the woman has enough to do what she pleases independent of remorse, which would require a far greater sum than the one you mentioned. But forgive me, the delicacie of your own mind must suggest all and more than I can say on this subject. Did I not think so, I could not esteem you as I do; so farewell this anticipated theme, since I am convinced wherever honour grips that will always be your border, and one

which neither personal interest nor fraternal affection will be able to make you step over.

I had this moment the inclosed[2] from Mr. Moore, and have done you the favour of allowing you a reading of my answer, which I beg you may put a wafer in, and send to the Dr., whether you subscribe to the contents or not. My reason for letting you see it was that, if you thought of the plan, you might take any step you thought could help it forward, as no time should be lost, if indeed it is not already over, which I am somewhat apprehensive of. I intended you a long letter, but this incident led me to address it to Mr. Moore, and my weak eyes have now made me blind. Yet I must give you a few lines more before I can bid you adieu. You heard me get a most violent attack for encouraging a man to expose himself by asking copies of nonsense he had wrot in rhyme. The accusation would have hurt me in any company, but more especially in yours. It set me in a dishonest as well as an unhospitable point of light, as unjust to a man and brutal to my guest. As you said of vindicating your conduct to those whose esteem you valued, I, who value your esteem more than perhaps anybody does mine, wish to vindicate mine to the man, the friend, and the poet, where to every eye I must have appeared blamable by the representation of a fact I could not wholly deny, but which I will try to elucidate more in my own favours by giving you the copies in question. The one was an address to a gentleman of the Weymes family, pretending to be the chief of the name, and whom the author wished to inspire with a resolution to stand for member of Parliament against a man who, he believed, had used him ill and broke his word. Whatever you say to the poetry, I don't believe you will find the arguments foolish, cold, or ill-calculated to move a vain man descended from M'Duff. The other was an epigram on reading "A Bard's Epitaph" of your acquaintance, and as follows :—

> Go, manly Bard, all Nature's words are thine;
> Thou giv'st them as thou had'st them clearly from the Nine.
> Tho' Fortune (that Blind B——) has heretofor frown'd,
> Be thy intrinsic worth with all her honours crown'd.

The gentleman is (some people say) mad. He is perhaps no poet, but I aver he is no fool at least, tho' only a poor rhymer like myself. I positively assert I meant not to lead him to expose himself by pretending to applaud what I thought ridiculous, but the conversation has so far opened my eyes to other folks' ideas that I believe I will never try crambo clink again, lest you should prove as hard a judge on me as the Major did on my poor

visitor, in whom you may some time or other be more interested. Meanwhile, adieu.—Yours, with honest sincerity and friendly esteem, FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Send me your Epitaph on R. Mure [Muir].

(1) This is the sole reference extant to a visit Burns must have paid to Dunlop in the summer of this year. Apparently some projected marriage of Gilbert to a lady "above his station" was discussed on the occasion, as well, perhaps, as the suggestion that Gilbert might take over the farm of Ellisland.

(2) Dr. Moore's communication probably referred to the professorship. See *antea*, p. 158.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House, Stewarton.

ELLISLAND, 21*st June* 1789.

Dear Madam—Will you take the effusions, the miserable effusions, of low spirits, just as they flow from their bitter spring? I know not of any particular cause for this worst of all my foes besetting me, but for some time my soul has been beclouded with a thickening atmosphere of evil imaginations and gloomy presages.

Monday Evening.

I have just heard Mr. Kirkpatrick[1] give a sermon. He is a man famous for his benevolence, and I revere him; but from such ideas of my Creator, good Lord deliver me! Religion, my honored friend, is surely a simple business, as it equally concerns the ignorant and the learned, the poor and the rich. That there is an incomprehensible Great Being, to whom I owe my existence, and that He must be intimately acquainted with the operations and progress of the internal machinery and consequent outward deportment of this creature which He has made: these are, I think, self-evident propositions. That there is a real and eternal distinction between virtue and vice, and, consequently, that I am an accountable creature; that from the seeming nature of the human mind, as well as from the evident imperfection, nay, positive injustice, in the administration of affairs, both in the natural and moral worlds, there must be a retributive scene of existence beyond the grave, must, I think, be allowed by every one who will give himself a moment's reflection. I will go further,

and affirm that from the sublimity, excellence and purity of His doctrine and precepts, unparalleled by all the aggregated wisdom and learning of many preceding ages, though, *to appearance*, He himself was the obscurest and most illiterate of our species; therefore Jesus Christ was from God. . . .

Whatever mitigates the woes or increases the happiness of others, this is my criterion of goodness; and whatever injures society at large or any individual in it, this is my measure of iniquity.

What think you, Madam, of my creed? I trust that I have said nothing that will lessen me in the eye of one whose good opinion I value almost to the approbation of my own mind.

Your little *dear* namesake has not yet made his appearance, but he is every day expected. I promise myself great assistance in training up his young mind to dignity of sentiment and greatness of soul, from the honored name by which he is called. I know many would despise and more would laugh at, such a way of thinking; but with all reverence to the cold theorems of Reason, a few honest Prejudices and benevolent Prepossessions, are of the utmost consequence, and give the finishing polish to the illustrious character of Patriot, Benefactor, Father and Friend; and all the tender relations included in the endearing word, Family. What a poor, blighted, rickety breed are the Virtues and charities when they take their birth from geometrical hypothesis and mathematical demonstration! And what a vigorous Offspring are they when they owe their origin to, and are nursed with the vital blood of a heart glowing with the noble enthusiasm of Generosity, Benevolence, and Greatness of Soul! The first may do very well for those philosophers who look on the world of man as one vast ocean, and each individual as a little vortex in it whose sole business and merit is to absorb as much as it can in its own center; but the last is absolutely and essentially necessary when you would make a Leonidas, a Hannibal, an Alfred, or a Wallace.

Whether this long letter may contribute to your entertainment is what I cannot tell; but one thing I know, my own spirits are a good deal the lighter for this opportunity of assuring you how sincerely I have the honor to be, Madam, your oblidged friend and humble servt. ROBT. BURNS.

(1) The Rev. Joseph Kirkpatrick was minister of Dunscore (the parish in which Ellisland is situated), and Burns with his family attended Dunscore Church.

To BURNS. DUNLOP, *27th June* 1789.

Surrounded as I have been by disease and death, tho' my hand has been employed sewing trimmings for the coffin and the face cloth for the dead, or in making the necessary preparations for the birth of another grandchild, which birth I am not without apprehension may be attended with the loss of a daughter, whose delicate state of health wears but a dismal presage at present, yet to whom my cares are of no use, and who is now about to leave me; my thoughts have often fled to you, and had they been placid enough to allow of my putting them on paper, would ere now have added another to the volumes you are about to receive, inscribed on the title-page "From the Author." You will judge of the situation we have been in, when I tell you we had two servants up every night, indeed sometimes three, watching the sick and the dying for above a month together; that for ten days there was not a room in the house but one out of reach of the agonising cry of an expiring man, and in that one lay Mrs. Henri unable to speak and half frantic with pain. The poor man was my son's servant, come here from Berwick the very day before he took his bed, a stranger and forlorn; knew no face or name around him, and was the son of a poor widow whom he had supported for eight years and now left desolate. Oh! my friend, could I tell you this poor fellow's distress and his manly, resigned, pious, dutiful manner of clearing his thorny path to the grave, the calm serenity, mild affection, and devout dignity his mind displayed during the intervals of racking torture, or even in distraction when pain did not extort the loudest screams of unutterable anguish, it could not fail to create in your heart such emotions as might be productive of the finest poem you ever wrot. But I will not dwell on a scene the tremors of which shook my nerves, and made me unable to write you. This accounts for my silence. But how, my dr. Sir, shall I satisfy myself in accounting for yours? In my intercourse with you I find it exemplified that there is no pleasure without pain, for you have been so good to me, and I have enjoyed it with so much grateful pleasure, that your attentions have acquired a degree of that attribute in providence which requires unremitting exertion for our preservation, and which the Psalms describe by saying "He shuts his hand we die." Believe me, when you shut your ink-glass my spirits grow much more faint than many of those who die in metaphor and song. I am seriously afflicted, and with all the anxiety of disappointed hope and jealous timidity of friendship, diffident of its

own claims, set about examining if I can have drawn upon myself that deprivation in which I feel unhappy in the full ratio of that relief my mind formerly reaped from your works, and still more from the fond idea of having secured a rank in your esteem which I fear you don't find on nearer investigation I have merit to hold entire. Have I said or wrot ought to displease? Even were it so, how can I retract? My words and letters are the very pictures of my soul at the moment, and she cannot wear disguise, even should her genuine features disgust a friend; nor would that regard be flattering which was procured by carrying false colours. Yet there are instantaneous ideas pass over every mind that fleet away like the changing clouds of the sky, and, when told our friend, should possess his memory no longer than they do our own, at least not to our hurt. What confidence expresses candour should peruse; the heart treasure what it approves; and the pen point out what it dislikes, that it may be removed as far as is possible or proper. Judge of me, dear Burns, by yourself. You would, I think, scorn to wear a false face for any one, but you would shave your beard to please your wife, or perhaps even to please me, if you thought that care could tend to put it further in your power. Trust me, I would not conceal, but really endeavour to prune away every exuberance or impropriety from my mind that could lessen your esteem, or create one disagreeable sensation in your breast. So don't punish any transient error by withdrawing a correspondence the most pleasing and indeed the only one of mere choice I now possess, and of which I assure you I feel the whole value. Do you remember you begged my pardon for enclosing a letter under my cover, and said you would never trouble me with another? Did you mean by this you would not write me again? I begin to fear you did, although I cannot guess why. I must own that, after 59 years habituated to mortification and disappointment, I should find this one of the most questionable shapes in which they ever appeared to me; but this is too terrific a specter for fancy herself to introduce. I will not, dare not think of it.

After receiving the note I had from Mr. Moore which I sent you, I wrot Mr. Creech to send me the books, and added that if he had no better conveyance he might send yours also, and I should take care you should receive them. Accordingly, two days ago, *Zeluco*[1] came, and with it Charlotte Smith's Sonnets[2] from herself. I used the freedom to stop them a day or two, that I might look at the last, and with a pencil have touched the lines I liked

best. If you differ, your handkerchief will at once obliterate the slight mark, but with what enhanced delight would I have read your *Spenser* had you left such indications of your partiality to better my judgment and direct my taste! I shall send it and the three above-mentioned volumes to Wilson at Kilmarnock to be forwarded to you, or to lie till called for, as you chuse to *direct* in a letter I will hope to have from you by *post*, as I sometimes persuade myself you have only delayed writing to give me the additional joy of hearing your son was born, and Mrs. Burns as well as I must ever wish the person you like best and on whom your future happiness in this world most depends.

Some days ago I happened to be in company where the conversation turned on Natural Philosophy and that equilibrium supported by the powers of nature through all the elements, from whence was a transition to the counterpoise of misery and happiness in different spheres and situations of human life, and some anecdotes about an old acquaintance of yours, from whence we had some strictures on your politicks and poetry, concluded by some regrets over a resolution you had exprest of printing nothing for fourteen years to come. This, after the company parted, produced some lines, which I shall send you, since I am a little afraid my proposal about your books has retarded your having them so soon as they might otherwise have arrived. But it is not the first time, though I wish it may be the last, when my desire to serve my friends has turned out to my disappointment and their disadvantage, as is the present case when you get my scrawl for a succedaneum, as Dr. Moore would say, for his and C. Smith's books. But, to use your own words, it shall be the last time for a great while at least that I will give you any trouble, unless you write me that you wish it. Farewell!—Yours sincerely,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Great and exalted above private ends,
Thro' Nature's laws Almighty Love extends.
Observe her works! she equalises all,
See water rise up from its deepest fall;
No cloud imbu'd with keen electric fire,
Unsharing lets a brother cloud retire.
. . . . . .

Since writing the above I have this moment the inclosed from Mr. Moore, which I send that you may see what has past, though I am afraid the time is past. Yet, as I mentioned before, I am pleased your name has been announced to Mr. Poultney, who is really the Mæcenas of this age, and may, God willing, as the sailors say, give you a fair wind another time. Adieu!

(1) *Zeluco*, Dr. Moore's novel, was published this year.
(2) *Elegiac Sonnets and other Essays*, by Charlotte Smith (vol. i., Chichester, 1784).

The following letter, it will be noted, is dated the same day as the preceding; and probably a day or two separated them in fact. More curious is it to see that this apologetic second letter of 27th June was kept for more than a fortnight, and was not franked by Kerr, at Edinburgh, till 17th July, on which date Burns was sending Mrs. Dunlop "The Kirk's Alarm."

Ad. Mr. Robert Burns,
Ellisland, Dumfries.

Dunlop, *27th June* 1789.
[Franked by Kerr.]

I have just, my worthy friend, received yours this moment. The value is threefold on account of its reaching me before it could be enforced by the receipt of a long, stupid piece, I dare say it was, which I wrot you when I laboured under an apprehension of your being tired of reading my scribbles, which, however long they may be, are very short compared to the long[1] I think for your replies, which always afford me pleasure far superiour to what goes under the name of entertainment. An opera or masquerade ticket costs half a guinea, your letter fourpence. Were the case reversed, believe me, my choice would not in consequence be reversed too, spite of my propensity to economy, which carries me further on some roads than it does anybody else; at least a number of my friends and of my enemies think so, perhaps for very different reasons, tho' perhaps two more than all others, both for this one, namely, that none of the two know ought of the matter, my reasons and motives being often a secret even to myself—a situation to which I suppose a man of your good sense must be wholly a stranger, though amongst us ladies nothing is more common. Indeed this kind of self-ignorance is our daily bread, so that it is no wonder we so often appear whimsical and capricious to the rest of the world—a fault which, as a poet, you are bound to forgive, if not to like us the better for it. I hope you are so like a woman yourself as to have changed your mood long ago, and that this shall no longer find you in low spirits, but that the exhilarating dose of confessing yourself to me has kept you merry ever since. I can readily absolve every heterodoxy of your creed, nor is there any great room to fear ever your religion and mine should run far counter, unless upon the principle that two of a trade can never agree. I even find in your faith a charming

support and auxiliary for my own, as the one is founded on solid understanding and rational induction, and the other on the spontaneous, undigested suggestions of warm affections. A man is attached by his judgement to his duty and his God; a woman by her passions and her heart. A timid sense of her own weakness makes her soul clasp to her Creator, and to those protecting, comforting friends He has given her. Every endearing duty strengthens those ties to which she wishes to owe her happiness and safety, and from whence alone she draws her consequence in this life, or probably borrows strength to reach the reward she looks forward to in the next. Let man glory in his reason and his strength, while woman owes to her native weakness, her goodness and her *grace*, and learns to pity ills she fears to feel. Yet I confess no fear for hell has ever as yet reached me, except it was that of cherishing for a moment any wish that could seem to deserve it—for example, one such as hurts me in Charlotte Smith's Elegy, but I have given my thoughts of her works on the cover. Oblige me in return with yours of the Doctor. I am ashamed to think how I must have disappointed him by keeping it so long out of your power to pronounce a sentence for which he is so truly anxious, and for which I am likeways impatient, as he is now the earliest and best friend I have alive, and tryed by more than fourty winters.

13th July.

When I had wrot this far, I was interrupted. I went to Loudoun with Mrs. Henri, who is much better; there she kept me longer than I intended, and thus my letter lay unfinished and your books unsent. I am now in earnest to make up as far as I can my lee-way in both. I have just received yours with the truly delightful Elegy,[2] in which I would have multiplyed the favourite marks without omitting one. The poet need never ask those tears of pity which would spontaneously embalm his memory and overflow his grass-grown turf, for which the sons of tenderness or of genius would forget that of Newmarket itself, and feel their losses and gains here still more interesting. You say my letter gave you pain. I hope not so much as your silence gave me. You have, however, like a true Christian, revenged yourself, and heaped coals of fire on my head by the pleasure I felt from the kindness as well as the poetry of yours, for to you I found myself indebted for both, and believed my anxiety about Mrs. Henri and her prospect of going abroad in bad health inspired the tender ideas that flow too warm from the heart to be wholly fiction.

But O! my friend, imagination does not reach the horrors of truth to the poor female who quits her native country and carries with her the sensibility of an affectionate character and the weakness of a woman. My daughter Mrs. Vans[8] at this moment sits over the cellar, under the floor of which she has been forced to thrust, at dead of night by stealth, the scarce cold remains of a sister and a friend she carried with her, and of a child she bore and nursed in that alien land, and never could shew to her mother, her brothers, or her sisters, and whose bones she must leave perhaps to the rage of superstition, from which she can only flatter herself to protect them by paying rent for the vault for ten years after she leaves the place, when it is believed the bodies will be consumed by time and a mixture of lime with which they are covered at the instant of hiding them from the cruelty of human (worse than) wolfs; these only prowl for food. How can we connect the present glorious stand of France for freedom with these remaining fetters of the mind? Are they as yet only galley-slaves, escaping and knocking down everything with their chains in their flight, or is this the native character of man which will remain after the establishment of freedom? Tell me, you who have looked through Nature, and know all her various mazes, how long the impressions made by living under an absolute government remain on the mind, and whether the abject debasement of the lowest class, or the overbearing insolence of the very softest of the upper ones, is most disgusting. For my own part, I believe I should like an Italian lazzeretto better than a French gentleman, as pity is a feeling more congenial to my soul than indignation, which frivolity and arrogance united must unavoidably create, whereas the greatest worldly bliss I have ever tasted has lain in the admiration, esteem, and reverence inspired by a truly amiable generous mind, at once noble and tender. Where great talents are joined with interesting weaknesses and amusing whimsical varieties, sometimes even little faults themselves season the compound perfectly to my taste; such it has sometimes been my happiness to meet or think I had met; for if the illusion lasts, it is the same thing to me in this world, and I dare say will be set right some way or other so as not to vex me in the next. Such I have believed some of my relations, and some such I have fancied my friends, even in the dark evening of my life. If I am wrong, may Heaven and they have goodness to protract the error as long as my existence! Forgive me, Dr. Sir, if in one instance I presume to chalk out even your path; in every other the powers of your own mind will naturally point to what will please me far beyond

the farthest suggestion of my own fancy. Yet I will freely own this one is now become perhaps more important than all the rest put together. So, pray don't neglect your *que*, though I don't even know how to spell it, and should I ever inadvertently forfeit the place I now flatter myself by your permission with holding in your registers, don't let me discover my misfortune, since I should feel it an irretrievably great one, the very suspicion of which would distress me more than many of those disasters the world pity most. It must be some months hence before I can give you good news of Mrs. H. I expect much sooner to have yours of Mrs. Burns. May they be happy as your fondest wish. I have this moment accounts of the death of a worthy old woman, one who, I think, liked me as much as any thing on earth, and attended me inlying of 13 children. She was my grandfather's servant, my brother's infant keeper, and my tenant's wife, aged 94 or 95. My spirits are this moment laid with her in the grave, where I bless God she is at rest, for her only son, a batchelor, who has brought up and been a father to three familys of her grand-children, and dedicate his very life to her, is thought in a consumption.

I thought to tell you of a humble poetess[4] who came from Ecclesfechan to be my chamber-maid on the merit of her attempting what seemed beyond her line in the way of writing or thinking. I parted with her to my daughter, thinking a child's maid, if she was fit for it, a better place than I had to offer. She was glad to go to Loudoun, because she heard you lived near it, and, as she told me, hoped to see you. Her outside promises nothing; her mind only bursts forth on paper, of which I send you a specimen in her own hand. She is industrious, and seems good-temper'd and discreet, but betrays no one indication that I could discover of ever having opened a book or tagged a rhyme; so that I hope she will not be less happy for having tryed it. Adieu. Your books go to-night to Wilson, who says he can always get them sent you easily. I take another sheet to tell you I have sent your "Faery Queene" with the other volumes to Kilmarnock. I had it so long by me I was half unwilling to quit sight of it, though alas! it was become invisible to my optics, but yet it was the memorial of another poet as well as its author, and I regretted I had not scratched the margins as I read it, but I was not then so well acquainted with the owner as to assume that liberty with his property. Tell me what you think of Jenny Little's "Looking-Glass." The occasion on which she wrot it was to convince a young lady who doubted the authenticity of her having wrot something else she had shewed her, and asked her to write on a given subject.

She said she had never done so, but, since she wished it, would try if she would give her one. She told her she had that forenoon broke a glass she was vext about, and bid her celebrate it. She did so, and a gentleman asked her on the same footing to make the acrostic on his name. These are play, not genius, and I fear you will say, like mistress like maid ; and if you do, I'm even afraid the maid will have most reason to be offended with the proverb. She made another in the character of a lover on a girl she called Calista, drest in her grandmother's crimson plaid, which gave the hint for some lines and a sketch of a landskip, with which I put off an idle half-hour, and which I send you to shew you how ladies put off a rainy morning doing they don't know what, and doing it they don't know how, and then exposing the folly to those they wish most their friends as I do now. All I shall say in my own vindication is that Scripture commands us to do as we would be done by, and I literally obey when I write and assure you of the sincere esteem and regard with which I am, Dr. Sir, your obliged and obedient humble servt., and, truth bids me add, ever gratefully your friend, FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Next month is August. Last August brought me four letters from the best correspondent and one of the most admired as well as esteemed men of my acquaintance. Ought I ever to hope any other month of my life shall dare pretend to rival August, 1788? I wish the Scots Bard would try what might be done in honour of the '89 which he ushered in so respectably with a New Year's gift that Swift's Stella or his own might have been vain of, especially if they had been three score like your humble servt. Are you not grateful for all this clean paper from me? I grudge it.

(1) *Think long*, Scotticism for *eagerly desire*, with a touch of *hopelessness*.

(2) See *infra*, p. 188. Burns's of the 7th had been received.

(3) Mrs. Vans Agnew, Mrs. Dunlop's fourth daughter, who lived long abroad.

(4) Janet Little (1759-1813), "the Scottish milkmaid" poetess, was placed in charge of the dairy at Loudoun Castle, the residence of the Henris. She published a volume of poems in 1792, became the wife of John Richmond, a labourer at Loudoun Castle.

The month of July 1789 has hitherto seemed almost a blank month in Burns's correspondence. The only letter of

his dated in this month that has been published is that of the 31st to Mr. Graham of Fintry. We are able to present the two which follow—of the 7th and 17th—from the Lochryan MSS. To his ordinary heavy labours the poet at this time had added the negotiations about his appointment to the Excise division in the midst of which he lived, and the studies which, under Mr. Graham's direction, he pursued in order to fit himself for his new duties.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House, Stewarton.

ELLISLAND *July 7th*, 1789.

Yours of the 27th June, which came to hand yesternight, has given me more pain than any letter, one excepted, that I ever received. How could you, my ever-honored, dear Madam, ask me, whether I had given up your correspondence, and how you had offended me? Offended me! Your conduct to me, Madam, ever since I was honored with your notice, has been equally amiable as uncommon; and your Correspondence has been one of the most supreme of my sublunary enjoyments. As I mentioned to you in a letter you will have by this time have received, I have since I was at Dunlop been rather hurried and out of spirits; and some parts of your late conduct has laid me under peculiar embarrassments. You had alarmed me lest that instead of the friend of your confidence, I was descending to be the creature of your bounty; for though you bestowed, not in the manner of serving me, but as if oblidging yourself; yet for the soul of me I could not help feeling something of the humiliating oppression of impotent gratitude.

July 8th.

I have been interrupted by the arrival of my aged Parent and my brother; and as he will convey this as far as Mauchline I shall finish my letter, though I cannot make it quite so long as I had otherwise intended. As I have no romantic notions of independancy of spirit, I am truly oblidged to you and Dr. Moore for mentioning me to Mr. Pulteney. From the manner in which God has divided the good things of this life, it is evident that He meant one part of Mankind to be the Benefactors, and the other to be the Benefacted; and as He has thrown me among this latter class I would wish to acquiesce with chearfulness. The

Professorship is, I know, to me an unattainable object, but Mr. Pulteney's character stands high as a Patron of merit, and of this, had I no other proof, you have made me believe that I have some share.

I some time ago met with the following Elegy[1] in MSS., for I suppose it was never printed, and as I think it has many touches of the true tender, I shall make no apology for sending it you: perhaps you have not seen it.

ELEGY

Strait is the spot and green the sod
From whence my sorrows flow,
And soundly sleeps the ever-dear
Inhabitant below.

Pardon my transport, gentle Shade,
While o'er this turf I bow;
Thy earthly house is circumscribed
And solitary now.

Not one poor stone to tell thy name,
Or make thy virtues known;
But what avails to thee, to me,
The sculpture of a stone?

I'll sit me down upon this turf,
And wipe away this tear;
The chill blast passes swiftly by
And flits around thy bier.

Dark is the dwelling of the dead,
And sad their house of rest;
Low lies the dead by Death's cold arm
In aweful fold embraced.

I saw the grim Avenger stand
Incessant by thy side;
Unseen by thee, his deadly breath
Thy lingering frame destroyed.

Pale grew the roses on thy cheek
And withered was thy bloom,
Till the slow poison brought thy youth
Untimely to the tomb.

Thus wasted are the ranks of men,
Youth, health and beauty fall;
The ruthless ruin spreads around
And overwhelms us all.

Behold, where round thy narrow house
The graves unnumbered lie;
The multitudes that sleep below
Existed but to die.

Some with the tottering steps of age
Trode down the darksome way;
And some in youth's lamented prime,
Like thee, were torn away.

Yet these, however hard their fate,
Their native earth receives,
Amid their weeping friends they dyed
And fill their father's graves.

From thy loved friends where first thy breath
Was taught by Heaven to flow,
Far, far removed, the ruthless stroke
Surprised and laid thee low.

At the last limits of our isle,
Washed by the western wave,
Touched by thy fate a thoughtful bard
Sits lonely on thy grave.

Pensive he eyes, before him spread,
The deep outstretched and vast;
His mourning notes are borne away
Along the rapid blast.

And while amid the silent dead
Thy hapless fate he mourns,
His own long sorrows freshly bleed,
And all his grief returns.

Like thee cut off in early youth
And flower of beauty's pride,
His friend, his first and only joy,
His much-loved Stella died.

Him too the stern impulse of fate
Resistless bears along;
And the same rapid tide shall whelm
The Poet and the song.

The tear of pity which he shed
He asks not to receive,
Let but his poor remains be laid
Obscurely in the grave.

His grief-worn heart with truest joy
Shall meet the welcome shock;
His airy harp shall lie unstrung
And silent on the rock.

O my dear maid, my Stella, when
Shall this sick period close,
And lead thy solitary Bard
To his beloved repose?

I have marked the passages that strike me most. I like to do so in every book that I read, and it will be a double pleasure in perusing the volumes you announce me, to see your favorite passages.

Poor Mrs. Henri! I shall be as impatient to hear news of her almost as I shall be of another whom I need not name. I hope that you see her situation through the exaggerating medium of fearful apprehension.

Farewell, Madam! God send good news to us all! Do me the justice to believe me when I assure you that there is scarcely any thing in life which gives me so much pleasure as that I have the honor to be, Madam, your oblidged friend and humble servt. ROBT. BURNS.

(1) This description of the origin of the Elegy on Stella is as mystifying as that prefixed to the transcript of the poem in the Glenriddell MS.—"The following poem is the work of some hapless son of the Muses who deserved a better fate. There is a great deal of 'The voice of Cona' in his solitary, mournful notes; and had the sentiments been clothed in Shenstone's language, they would have been no discredit even to that elegant poet.—R. B."

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
by Stewarton.

ELLISLAND, *17th July* 1789.

DEAR MADAM—I assure you it is none of my least incentives to rhyme that it gives me an opportunity not only of acknowledging, but you are good enough to think, in some degree of repaying that hopeless debt of kindness and friendship which I so largely owe you. You know my sentiments respecting the present two great parties that divide our Scots Ecclesiastics. I do not care three farthings for Commentators and authorities. An honest, candid enquirer after truth, I revere; but illiberality and wrangling I equally detest. You will be well acquainted with the persecutions that my worthy friend, Dr. M'Gill, is undergoing among your Divines. Several of these reverend lads, his opponents, have come thro' my hands before; but I have some thoughts of serving them up again in a different dish. I have

just sketched the following ballad, and as usual I send the first rough-draught to you. I do not wish to be known in it, tho' I know, if ever it appear, I shall be suspected. If I finish it, I am thinking to throw off two or three dozen copies at a Press in Dumfries, and send them as from Edinr. to some Ayrshire folks on both sides of the question. If I should fail of rendering some of the Doctor's foes ridiculous, I shall at least gratify my resentment in his behalf. I long to hear from you, not only for your criticism on this, but for a much more important matter, to be informed of Mrs. Henri's fate and welfare. Whatever interests you, can not be indifferent to me.

THE KIRK'S ALARM[1]—A BALLAD

Tune—"Push about the brisk bowl"

Orthodox, Orthodox, who believe in John Knox,
Let me sound an alarm to your conscience;
There's a heretic blast has been blawn i' the west—
"That what is not sense must be nonsense," Orthodox,
"That what is not sense must be nonsense."

Doctor Mac,[2] Doctor Mac, ye should stretch on a rack,
To strike evildoers wi' terror;
To join FAITH and SENSE, upon any pretence,
Was heretic, damnable error, Doctor Mac,
Was heretic, damnable error.

Town of Ayr, Town of Ayr, it was rash, I declare,
To meddle wi' mischief a brewing;
Provost John[3] is still deaf to the church's relief,
And Orator Bob[4] is its ruin, etc.

D'rymple mild, D'rymple mild, tho' your heart's like a child
And your life like the new-driven snaw,
Yet that winna save ye, old Satan must have ye,
For preaching that three's ane and twa, etc.

Calvin's sons, Calvin's sons, seize your spiritual guns,
Ammunition ye never can need;
Your hearts are the stuff will be powder enough,
And your sculls are a storehouse o' lead, etc.

Rumble John,[5] Rumble John, mount the steps with a groan,
Cry the Book is wi' heresy cramm'd,
Then lug out your ladle, deal brimstone like aidle, muck-water
And roar every note o' the d—mn'd, etc.

Simper James,[6] Simper James, leave the fair Killie dames,
There's a holier chase in your view:
I'll lay on your head that the pack ye'll soon lead,
For puppies like you there's but few, etc.

Singet Sawnie,[7] Singet Sawnie, are ye herding the penny,
Unconscious what danger awaits;
With a jump, yell and howl, alarm every soul,
For Hannibal's just at your gates, etc.

Daddie Auld, Daddie Auld, there's a tod i' the fauld, fox
A tod meikle waur than the Clerk,[8]
Douglas, Heron and Co. has e'en laid you fu' low,
But tho' ye canna bite ye may bark, etc.

Poet Willie,[9] Poet Willie, gie the Doctor a volley,
Wi' your "liberty's chain" and your wit:
O'er Pegasus' side ye ne'er laid a stride,
Ye only stood by where he ——, etc.

Jamie Goose,[10] Jamie Goose, ye hae made but toom roose empty boast
In hunting the wicked Lieutenant,[11]
But the Doctor's your mark, for the L——'s holy ark
He has couper'd and ca'd a wrang pin in, etc. driven

This is all the length I have gone.[12] Whether I proceed any farther is uncertain.

Captn. Grose,[13] the well-known author of the *Antiquities of England and Wales*, has been through Annandale, Nithsdale and Galloway, in the view of commencing another Publication, *The Antiquities of Scotland.* As he has made his headquarters with Captn. Riddel, my nearest neighbour, for these two months, I am intimately acquainted with him; and I have never seen a man of more original observation, anecdote and remark. Thrown into the army from the Nursery, and now that he is the father of a numerous family, who are all settled in respectable situations in life, he has mingled in all societies, and knows every body. His delight is to steal thro' the country almost unknown, both as most favorable to his humour and his business. I have to the best of my recollection of the old buildings, etc., in the County, given him an Itinerary thro' Ayrshire. I have directed him among other places to Dunlop House, as an old building worthy of a place in his Collection. It would have been presumption in such a man as I, to offer an introductory letter between such folks as Captn. Grose and Major Dunlop, tho' for the honour of my native county, I could have wished that Captn. Grose had been introduced to the Dunlop family, and the Major would have been of much use to him in directing him thro' the farther corner of Cunningham, a place I little know; however if you discover a chearful-looking grig of an old, fat fellow, the precise figure of Doctor Slop, wheeling about your avenue in his own carriage with a

pencil and paper in his hand, you may conclude "Thou art the man."

Perhaps after all, I may pluck up as much impudent importance as write to the Major by him. He will go for Ayrshire in four or five days, but I have directed him thro' Carrick and Kyle first.—I have the honour to be, Madam, your humble friend and most obedient servt. ROBT. BURNS.

(1) "Lament" deleted and "Alarm" written in as a second thought.

(2) Dr. M'Gill.
(3) Provost Ballantine.
(4) Robert Aiken.
(5) Russell.
(6) M'Kindlay.
(7) Moodie.
(8) G. Hamilton, writer.
(9) Peebles; see a poem he published on the Revolution thanksgiving.
(10) Young, New Cumnock.
(11) Lieut. Mitchel, Deleagles.

Notes (2) to (11) are Burns's, written in the margins of the copy. No attempt is made here to supplement his annotations.

(12) This letter antedates the composition of "The Kirk's Alarm." Hitherto no earlier copy has been known than that which Burns sent to John Logan on 7th August, and which is complete but for one stanza. The Presbytery took action in Dr. M'Gill's case on 15th July; so the poet must have written off at a heat these eleven stanzas, which he forwarded to Mrs. Dunlop on the 17th. The complete poem contains eighteen stanzas.

(13) The "fine, fat, fodgel wight," for whose *Antiquities of Scotland* "Tam o' Shanter" was written. This is the first mention of him in Burns's correspondence.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS,
Elliesland, Dumfries.

DUNLOP, *1st Augt.* 1789.
[Franked by Kerr.]

Dr. Burns—Where, my ever esteemed friend, shall I begin my letter? Methinks I hear the voice just set to the shrill key of satire answer "I have many a time seen you not know where to end one." But should wit prompt this, I will not believe your judgment or inclination seconds the sally. On the contrary, you have convinced me my letters in general give you pleasure by persuading me one of them has given you pain—an effect, I'm sure, the writer of them never meant to produce, though, as the

cause was my complaint of your silence, and I have found your grief productive of repentance, I must own I for once rejoice in your sorrow and profit by your amendment. I have received two of yours since I presumed, perhaps improperly, to murmur at not hearing from you, instead of expressing my gratitude for the part of your time—a part so much more than I can deserve or return —which you had so kindly stole from the rest of the world to dedicate to me. You tell me writing to me is an incentive to rhyme. If so, ages unborn shall bless and thank my memory, for one rhyme will lead to another, and the breathings of a truly poetic soul will be often such as will soothe the anguish of the wounded spirit, and elevate the mind sunk in despondency. Even the airy bubble blown by levity as long as the eye can follow it steals us from this world's woes, and though it instantly burst if we regard the hand it fell from, we watch the dropping of the next as eagerly as a child that looks for soap bells glittering a moment to the sun before they are forever lost in empty air. True, they did not please long; but which of our worldly enjoyments do? Besides, they cost no trouble to the maker. 'Twas but a puff; his breath is unexhausted, and ready to blow off a thousand more as long as they can divert himself or please us children of the world. Perhaps, too, some of these brittle bells may, like brittle china, be rouped off by the candle before they are broken, and bring in more, while in fashion, than a better thing could do. Time or place sometimes imprint a local value that will rise and fall quicker than the stocks, perhaps sink 100 per cent by to-morrow in the auction of wit. 'Tis hard to say how the sales run. Her cap, like that of Liberty, is sometimes plain and solid, of inestimable value; sometimes light, and hung round with bells; sometimes guarded with squibs and crackers, such as a certain friend of mine, trying on said cap t'other day, shaked off with an angry toss of his head at the presbytery when they were seating themselves to furnish a drawing of the Holy Inquisition. I fear, however, they will show their noble perseverance by continuing till the last act, and giving an *auto-de-fe*, in which I wish they may allow the Dr. to get away without the Benitor [san benito]—I believe they call the robe they march to be burnt in, and which it would give a sacred satisfaction to the *Auld* gentleman to fit on a worthy man before he left the world, perhaps as much as he formerly felt in lighting up the *ignis fatuus* spark that misled the same court to persecute one of the first men ever adorned the priesthood through fourteen presbyteries, four or five synods, and two General Assemblies, for

having once, some years before he was admitted one of the number, gone twice the figure eight at a wedding. Now, my friend, having some partiality for my female taste, asks my opinion of fancy's toys sometimes, particularly of this last cap she wore. What shall I say? Shall I satirize satire, or hold the match to fire her future squibs? In truth, I believe I will do neither. All I can afford is to laugh a few minutes at these King's-birthday frolicks and fireworks. I did so heartily, but, my dr. Burns, I am now in the last evenings of my life; the bright torch of your genius is perhaps the last I shall ever see lighted, and I grudge extremely to see it wasted singeing muketoes [mosquitos] in a corner, instead of being set on a hill where it cannot be hid, and giving light to the world. Besides, I cannot help being afraid that, instead of relieving the Dr., and putting his enemies to shame, you may be blowing the horn for a new chase against one of his friends, and a man who rivals him in innocent simplicity and goodness of heart. But I need not tell you what D——r Mild is when you have painted him so strongly and in his true natural colours, as like a picture as ever was sketched by Sir Joshua Reynolds. Yet should your ballad lead the puppies full cry a heretic-hunting, you'll wish you had bit your tongue rather than given the view-hollo, and cast off a whole pack of blood-hounds against a poor little white rabbit. Should this happen, I verily think it would be the blackest sin you ever committed, and I'm sure I would sympathize with your penitential pangs, which could not fail of being very acute, were you to hurt one whom all mankind ought to love, for he loves them all, and if he sometimes scolds them in the pulpit, he means it all for their own good. As for the rest of your game, I am thankful I don't know one of them; but since they are beasts of prey, 'tis fair to annoy them on their own account. Yet I have known an otter turn and lame a man for life who pursued him for his skin. And will it not be more provoking still to meet mischief where nothing is to be got but a vile guff of rank malice which one would be glad to run out of the reach of? 'Tis strange how I go on when I set a scribbling to you—I who never almost now scribble to any one else, and have not yet mentioned what you were so good as say interested you most, the health of my poor Susan. She is better, and I would now fain hope may carry about her child the full time, and improve in strength afterwards, as the wise people about her flatter me she has no threatening symptoms remaining—a fact for which, however, I have hardly full faith; but I dare not pry too far in futurity. We have no accounts of Anthony yet, and 'tis

there I feel myself most vulnerable, tho' I cannot say why. May the God of earth and ocean guard him! His heart is the monument where my memory, I think, will be longest enshrined. There is a tenderness in his filial piety I never saw any other possess. Never can I forget the proofs I once saw of it, and if my soul anticipates that lingering look our departed spirits cast back to earth, 'tis to hope I will live in his mind united to his father.

My cares are at present cruelly divided. I believe I must go a while to the east country, and that John's wife will not admit of my remaining till the last with Susan. Poor thing! she has no friend but myself to trust to for the care of herself, her former son and a family they can in no way afford to have neglected. The other is still amongst her friends, and almost still in the bosom of her own family. I shall therefore endeavour to add my mite of comfort to those who have most need of it. Yet I will hope to hear of you and yours before I leave home, as I shall not go for a fortnight longer, nor till I have carried home Lady Wallace to Loudoun, and seen how they all go on; so that you may write me here till I furnish you a new address, before which time I shall hope to have heard of Mrs. Burns and her child being as well as can be expected, getting your strictures on *Zeluco*, and your telling me as much as you chuse to tell me of the plan you were engaged in when I saw you last. The news of the day here is that Col. Fullarton[1] is gone to Constantinople with the first recommendations ever given to any British man to serve in the Turkish Army. I think he is wrong, but his is a glorious ambition, the fault of heroes and of gods. I wish to God he had been my son, or, as the King said of General Wolff, that he had bit my eldest son and infected him with half his own enterprize of spirit, which has already commanded civil and military applause, fame, and fortune. I wonder if, like the Great Frederick, he is insensible to love. I wish he were as fond of a daughter of mine as ever you were of your Jean. Would it not be a noble conquest, worthy the blood of Wallace? Yet many a hero would make a wretched bad husband, and perhaps even he might be of that number. At least, as I shall have very little chance of him for a son-in-law, I shall comfort myself in remembering that this is no impossibility. Farewell, but I trust not a long farewell, while you possess so much of the esteem and best wishes of FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Your fat merry grig has not appeared that I have heard of

yet, but I mentioned him to Andrew, who says he knew one of the name at Gibraltar a good many years ago, and will be glad to renew the acquaintance, if it is the same, or if not, I think will not be dissatisfied to begin a new score wherever you mark the page. I am grown so blind I doubt I must give up letter-writing, or you will give up reading first, for it will soon be impossible even for myself. While you can make it out yet, let me tell you I have marked your "Ode to Mrs A——'s Memory," "Address to the Regency Bill," last "Elegy," and "Afton Water," as worthy of immortal preservation from the press: the "Hare" I know you noted yourself, and vanity prompts my wishing you to recollect your *New Year's Day*, *Eighty-nine* imployment without recantation. I now leave you to congratulate my worthy friend Kerr on his promotion.[2] I like him the better that he has taste to distinguish the Scots Bard as the only man in whose favours he exerts his priviledge of franking. I wish all the rest of the world who had the power of rewarding merit shared as much in the predilection of, Dr. Burns, your sincere friend, and obedient, humble sert.

(1) Colonel William Fullarton of Fullarton (see *antea*, p. 10), at this time forty-five years of age; "Brydone's brave ward" of the "Vision." He did not spend the rest of his life in the service of the Turkish government, for, as previously noted, he entered the British Parliament in 1796, and sat till 1803, and he was subsequently Governor of Trinidad.

(2) Probably to the Secretaryship of the Post Office.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Loudon Castle, by Kilmarnock (missent to Stewarton).

ELLISLAND, 19*th August* 1789.

Dear Madam—I had written you ere this time but for waiting the issue of two to me important events which were hanging in the wind. I mentioned to you my Excise hopes and views. I have been once more a lucky fellow in that quarter. The Excise-men's Salaries are now £50 per ann., and I believe the Board have been so oblidging as fix me in the Division in which I live; and I suppose I shall begin doing duty at the commencement of next month.[1] I shall have a large portion of country, but, what to me and my studies is no trifling matter, it is a fine romantic Country.

More luck still! About two hours ago I welcomed home your

little Godson.[2] He is a fine squalling fellow, with a pipe that makes the room ring. His Mother as usual.

Zeluco I have not thoroughly read so as to give a critique on it. To say it is an excellent performance is but echoing the opinion of the world: I shall be more particular in *my* remarks.

You will easily guess that in the present situation of my family, and in my preparations for the Excise, that I have indeed little spare time. To you, Madam, that little spare time is more chearfully devoted than to any other person or purpose.

Miss Charlotte Smith has delighted me. Her Elegy in particular is one of the first performances that I have ever seen. Your pencil has in every mark prevented mine.—I have the honor to be, Dear Madam, your oblidged, grateful humble servt., ROBT. BURNS.

P.S.—The following lines I sent Mr. Graham as my thanks for my appointment:—

[3] I call no goddess to inspire my strains,
A fabled Muse may suit a Bard that feigns:
"Friend of my life!" my ardent spirit burns,
And all the tribute of my heart returns,
For boons accorded, goodness ever new,
The Gift still dearer as the Giver YOU.

Thou Orb of Day! Thou other Paler Light!
And all ye many-sparkling Stars of Night!
If aught that Giver from my mind efface;
If I that Giver's bounty e'er disgrace;
Thou roll, to me, along your wandering spheres,
Only to number out a villain's years!

[4] I lay my hand upon my swelling breast,
And grateful would—but cannot speak the rest.

(1) Scott Douglas suggested that Burns did not commence duty as an exciseman till the beginning of November. In the new *Chambers*, vol. iii. p. 96, on the strength of an entry in "List of all the Divisions, officers, expectants, etc., in Scotland as they stand at 10th October 1789," it is inferred that he entered upon his duties immediately on receiving the appointment, *i.e.* about the beginning of August. This letter shows that he expected at least to start at the beginning of September.

(2) Francis Wallace, born 18th August 1789, died 9th July 1803.

(3) This sonnet is dated in the original MS., 10th August.
(4) These two lines are not, as the editors of the *Centenary* Burns say they are, wanting in the Lochryan MS.

Ad. Mr. Robert Burns, Elliesland,
Dumfries.

Dunlop, 20*th Augt.* 1789.
[Franked by Kerr.]

Dr. Burns—Why have you not wrote me? Is this, like most of our misfortunes, my own fault? Did I not tell you I was uncertain as to my place of destination? Nay, did I not hint at some fear your letter might never reach me? Indeed, there is no part of my property for which I would feel more anxious concern than the safety of my letters from the very few friends with whom I keep up any sort of correspondence, or rather to whom I sometimes write; for 'tis now many years since I could be said to maintain any regular intercourse by letter even with my absent children. How strange must this appear to you who I have perfectly persecuted with a correspondence, who has been haunted with my letters in whole volumes; and who, I dare say, has even felt it often an encroachment on your time to give them a cursory glance of an eye while you were thinking on something else; or, if you really favoured them with your attention, would hardly ever meet anything that could deserve or reward it; who have, nevertheless, had the goodness to write me often to flatter my self-love by the kind and obliging manner in which you did it to amuse and interest me by the communication of your ideas in verse and prose, and sometimes raise me in my own esteem by an apparent confidence you seemed to repose in me, and a certain partial regard which seemed to distinguish me more than I ought to have expected among the multitudes whom your fame had rendered emulous of your notice. Believe me, you never used the slightest expression which vanity could construe in her own favours, that I did not read with grateful delight, proud even to draw compliment itself from your pen, for even compliment indicates a desire to please; and what so pleasing as that wish in one who, without ever thinking of the matter, had hit on the way of pleasing all the world beside? I believe I have formerly told you I had an unbounded wish once in my life to have seen the King of Prussia and Dr. Oliver Goldsmith. After reading your works, I was seized with the like to know you. This was the more particular, as at that time my mind was in so torpid a state as hardly to admit any suggestion entitled to the name of a wish; indeed this was

rather confined to an emotion of curiosity, and fully exprest in these lines—

> Let me each cranny of that soul peruse
> Admire that man and wonder at that muse.

But never did I once suppose either he or his Muse in the course of their studies would make the pause required for a single comma to peruse anything I could offer to their view. I only run and cried "Holla!" to stop the passengers till I should have a full look at them. They run on, peeping a little behind as I came up, when at last, pleased or perhaps only diverted at my awkward eagerness in the chase, instead of stopping with the Irish intrepidity of the beautiful Miss Gunnings, who bid the mob gaze their fills, you, to my inexpressible satisfaction, reached me a friendly hand, and even bid your Muse herself help to raise me out of that Gulph of Despond in which my very soul was then immersed. She sprung on with reviving energy at the unhoped-for aid, and fluttered a while like a butterfly in winter, who appears all alive and well, but that is soon over with her, and I believe with me too. A thousand anxieties at this moment tear me to pieces. Anguish rebounds upon me from beyond the Indian Ocean. I hear nothing of my dear Anton. His dog, all he had to leave behind him, is suddenly dead. Superstition is ever alive when we are unhappy. Last night his howl alarmed me for his master; to-day his everlasting silence speaks a direful presage to my heart. I have just rent myself from poor Susan, round whom teeming sorrows crowd which I cannot disperse. The commotions of France strike at my peace, and my daughter-in-law's situation calls me to a divided duty; I cannot say which will be foremost. I believe neither of these ladies will be for a month yet. I shall, if no unforseen circumstance prevent me, be with the poorest and most helpless (John's wife), but will not leave this for a fortnight yet. So, pray do write me during that time, if possible, but don't say my conduct ever hurts you, or suppose you can change your place in my friendship, unless to take a higher. I wish to God your promotion in life could keep pace with your permanent rank in my regard or goodwill. I must acknowledge you have not indeed risen without purchase, since you have given yourself frequent trouble to preserve what you owed to merit alone, and could not be robbed of without injustice. What others may despise, but what you teach me to value (my friendship), you say has added to your happiness. That makes it inestimable in my own eyes, and I will in future be, if possible, still more wary on whom

I bestow it. Yet how shall I say so, since hitherto it has always been an involuntary gift, and I much doubt will always remain so, spite of every caveat reason can enter. Reason, with all her pretentions, is only human, and therefore apt to err. Those native impulses which sometimes leads our approbation, or rather choice of our most intimate friends, resembles instinct, which is somewhere called the voice of God, and therefore must be right. At least, as I have always found it productive of most happiness, both in prospect and reality, I am resolved to encourage a pleasing delusion which has never yet hurt me, but to which I have been indebted for the most enviable moments of my existence—a propensity which prompted me to cultivate your acquaintance when I was flying that of the world, and which procured a favourable reception for those scrawls with which I presumed to intrude upon you before you had, like Ahasuerus, held out the golden scepter of kind consent with which you have now sanctioned my approach, and interested me in every thing that interests you, not only as a poet, but as a friend, to whom I consider myself as under everlasting obligations, such, indeed, as I trust in God I shall never again owe to any one ; for I hope Providence will close my eyes without any future event being able to sink me in such melancholy as had overwhelmed me when chance first threw your writings in my hand, and the singularity of the Kilmarnock title-page induced me to investigate their merit. I found there strains like the Tomb of Becket, fit to awake the dead. I read, then write. My knell, which seemed ringing out, was turned into chimes, for, like Falstaff, you were not only moral and witty, but caused it in others ; and tho' my chimes were perhaps but fools' bells, they helped to divert the child who rung them, but whose mind was unsuited to other occupations, and were generally addrest to you. Since I have resumed some care of my family, of which I was long incapable, I lift the pen seldomer, and my needle, or the varied concerns of those children for whom I live, oftener employs my hand and my mind, so that, were it worth your while to think of me at all, I'm apprehensive you might believe me whimsical and unsteady in cultivation of that friendship I had so eagerly solicited.

I am just returned from Loudoun. The greatness of the place, where £8000 a year more than the income of the estate had been spent, and so fine a fortune ruined ; the respectability of the old Earl's [1] character as a landlord and master in his private capacity, that sacred shrine in which he still lives, sainted the warm, affectionate hearts of his yet remaining servants and dependant

pensioners; when I add to these the mean venality of his public political life, musing on all together as I wandered through those sweet, serpentine hermit's paths which he had consecrated to profligacy and Miss Mason, I cannot help saying within myself, What is man, or to what end is he created or endowed with so heterogeneous a mixture of vice and virtue, fervour and folly? Why did he who made hundreds happy ruin himself? Why was so connubial a mind destined for celibacy? Had the Earl only been fond of this girl, one might have exclaimed with Pope, "Health, fame, fortune, what art thou to love?" But when they follow him to London, that idea which might adorn the *fête champêtre* disappears in the crowd of demoiselles amongst whom Kate Walker's gray hairs shine a badge of constancy that in wedded life had done honor to the Scots peerage. After all, this man's benevolence of heart embalms his memory, and I weep over the alienation of property and want of lineal representatives of John, Earl of Loudoun, who provided for the posterity or declining age of every thing that had ever been about him, and eclipsed the remembrance of his successor, to whose gentle goodness you were no stranger, but whose name is never pronounced now in that place where misfortune ended his days, and has buried his former life in oblivion. Well, be it so; let former times, since it must be so, be forgotten. Let the name of Morni be forgotten, and the young men say "Behold the father of Gaul"; when Campbells, Craufords, and Wallaces shall be passed away, in those later days perhaps some fashionable biographer shall arise who, celebrating the fame of his young hero, may set out by telling us his father's name was F. W. Burns, son to the renowned bard of that name, whose contemporary writers alledge he was a peasant in the West, but whose works prove a degree of erudition inconsistent with that report, as it seems more probable he had been the son of some noble Scot, who, for some crime, perhaps that of fidelity to his unfortunate Kings, had forfeited his splendid situation in the world, and been driven to shelter himself in obscurity, into which he carried those brilliant acquirements that could never be hidden, but, bursting forth in the eighteenth century, dazzled the world, and, spite of the amazing revolutions which then took place in Europe and America, shared so much of their divided attention. Meanwhile the polish of western manners at that time was great, so that we find the *belles-lettres* cultivated by all stations, particularly among the female sex. In Augt. 1789 a chamber-maid in Ayrshire, the early residence of the above-mentioned bard, wrote

in the dialect of the country some poems, of which we have the following lines remaining. Her name was Janet Little, but critics dispute whether she had it from her father, or because her genius was believed of the dwarfish kind—a species of stature and wit then imported into Britain by the famous Count Borowastic, and from thence greatly admired and sure of making the possessor's fortune or immortalising his memory. The lines as follows :—

In Royal Anna's golden days
Hard was the task to gain the bays ;
Difficult was the hill to climb ;
Some brak a neck, some lost a limb.
The votries for poetic fame
Got off decripet, blind, and lame ;
Except that little fellow Pope,
Few ever then won near the top ;
And Homer's crutches he may thank,
Or down the brae he'd got a clank.
Addison, Thompson, Young, and Prior
Did mount on Pegasus without a fear,
In hopes to please a learned age ;
But Doctor Johnson in a rage
Unto posterity did show
Their blunders fast, their beauties slow.
But now he's dead, ye well may ken,
When ilka sumph maun hae a pen,
And write in hamely uncouth rhymes,
And yet, forsooth, they please the times.
A plowman chiel, Rab Burns his name,
Pretends to write and thinks nae shame
To souse his sonnets on the Court ;
And troth what's strange, they praise him for't,
Ev'n folks that's of the highest station
Ca's him the glory of our nation ;
. . . . . .

24th August '89.

I shall set out for Morham Mains, I think, about the eighth of next month at farthest, but will hope to hear from you here before that time, and that you will give me accounts of your own family, where I trust, spite of your silence, all goes well, and I may already wish you joy of the arrival of your little stranger, which my own indistinctness has, I presume, hindered me from seeing anounced to.—Dr. Sir, yours, etc. etc.,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) John, fourth Earl of Loudoun, took a very active

part in repressing the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745. He also served his country abroad, being Governor of Virginia, and in 1756 Commander-in-Chief of the forces in America. He spent a great deal in the improvement of the estate of Loudoun, particularly in planting, his specialty being willows. He was a Scotch representative Peer for the long period of forty-eight years. He died unmarried in 1782 in his seventy-seventh year, and was succeeded by his cousin, James Muir Campbell, fifth Earl, who married Miss Macleod of Raasay, sister of the Isabella of Burns's song, "Raving winds around her blowing." He shot himself on account of financial troubles in 1786. This last Earl was the landlord of the Burnses at Mossgiel, and it was at his death that the farm was sold to Alexander of Ballochmyle. He left an only daughter, afterwards referred to as the little Countess, who took the Loudoun estate and title into the Hastings family by her marriage with the first Marquis. Her great-grandson is the present Earl of Loudoun.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, *6th Sept.* 1789.

Dear Madam—I have mentioned in my last my appointment to the Excise and the birth of little Frank, who, by the bye, I trust will be no discredit to the honorable name of Wallace, as he has a fine manly countenance and a figure that might do credit to a little fellow two months older; and likewise an excellent good temper, though when he pleases he has a pipe, only not quite so loud as the horn[1] that his immortal namesake blew as a signal to take out the pin of Stirling Bridge.

I had some time an epistle, part poetic and part prosaic, from your poetess Miss J. Little,[2] a very ingenious, but modest, composition. I should have written her as she requested, but for the hurry of this new business. I have heard of her and her compositions in this country, and, I am happy to add, always to the honor of her character. The fact is, I know not well how to write to her: I should sit down to a sheet of paper that I knew not how to stain. I am no dab at fine-drawn letter-writing; and, except when prompted by friendship or gratitude, or, which happens extremely rarely, inspired by the Muse (I know not her name) that presides over epistolary writing, I sit down, when necessitated to write, as I would sit down to beat hemp.

Some parts of your letter of the 20th August, struck me with the most melancholy concern for the state of your mind at present. . . .

Would I could write you a letter of comfort! I would sit down to it with as much pleasure as I would to write an epic poem of my own composition that would equal the *Iliad*. Religion, my dear friend, is the true comfort! A strong persuasion in a future state of existence; a proposition so obviously probable, that, setting revelation aside, every nation and people, so far as investigation has reached, for at least four thousand years, have, in some mode or other, firmly believed it. In vain would we reason and pretend to doubt. I have myself done so to a very daring pitch; but when I reflected that I was opposing the most ardent wishes and the most darling hopes of good men, and flying in the face of all human belief, in all ages, I was shocked at my own conduct.

I know not whether I have ever sent you the following lines, or if you have ever seen them; but it is one of my favourite quotations, which I keep constantly by me in my progress through life, in the language of the book of Job,

Against the day of battle and of war—

spoken of religion:

[3] 'Tis *this*, my friend, that streaks our morning bright,
'Tis *this* that gilds the horror of our night:
When wealth forsakes us and when friends are few;
When friends are faithless or when foes pursue;
'Tis this that wards the blow or stills the smart,
Disarms affliction or repels his dart;
Within the breast bids purest raptures rise,
Bids smiling conscience spread her cloudless skies.

I have been very busy with *Zeluco*. The doctor is so obliging as to request my opinion of it; and I have been revolving in my mind some kind of criticisms on novel-writing, but it is a depth beyond my research. I shall, however, digest my thoughts on the subject as well as I can. *Zeluco* is a most sterling performance.

Farewell!—*A Dieu, le bon Dieu, je vous commende.*

R. B.

(1) Fra Jop the horn he hyntyt and couth blaw
Sa asprely, and warned gud Jhon Wricht:
The rowar out he straik with gret slycht;

The laiff zeid doun, quhen the pynnysont gais.
A hidwys cry amang the peple rais ;
Bathe hors and men in to the wattir fell !

Schir William Wallace, book 7, lines 1180-5.

Jop (formerly Grymmysbe) was a pursuivant of Edward.

(2) It is not known if Burns replied to her letter. She afterwards visited Ellisland to obtain an interview with Burns, but failed, as the poet had broken his arm, and was confined to bed.

(3) These lines are from Verses to James Hervey on his *Meditations*, by a physician. They are usually prefixed to the *Meditations and Contemplations*.

Ad. Mr. Robert Burns, Elliesland,
Dumfries.

Morhame Mains, 6*th Sept.* 1789.
[Franked by Kerr.]

Dr. Burns—I told you my fears for Susan. Providence has verified the presages, but in a way I thought not of. She is well as I could dare to hope, but her child has paid the price of her redemption, and, believe me, I account it a small one, and bless that hand which has been pleased to take the innocent babe to itself, though in a way that gave me the most alarming fears for the mother's life. Just the day after I wrote you last, I got an express telling me she was delivered of a dead boy in consequence of a fright she had got by one of the horses falling down in a strong convulsion as she was airing in a carriage about ten days before. Those, my friend, are secured from such accidents who have no carriage. Let us learn to know and mark the advantages of our lot with a gratefully contented heart and a justly distinguishing eye. I had a carriage, but, having also a lame horse, could not use it to fly to my distrest child. I sent to hire, but could find none. I set out on foot to beg from Cunninghame Lienshaw one to Kilmarnock, and so got to Loudoun in time to find the child buried and the disappointed mother in all the agonies of departed hope and bodily weakness. I staid with her till the tenth day was past, when I left her pretty much recovered to the care of her grandmother and sisters, and set about preparing to set out for this, when the same post brought me your letter and one from John telling me his wife had likeways brought him a son, and begging to see me with all convenient speed. I set off

on Thursday night at seven o'clock, came to Glasgow, and even there could hardly find a chaise; got one by twelve, and after spending all night on the road, arrived here next morning, where I found all so well that I might just as well have staid quietly at home, and enjoyed the good luck these twin letters had announced, and which I hope shall long be preserved for the happiness of all concerned. One would have thought I had some presentiment of what a hurry I should be put in when I welcomed the little Wallace so long ago, for indeed I should now hardly have commanded time for his reception. Why has he no companion to chear his journey through the dreary vale, or do you expect he is to be worth two himself that he is thus degraded by coming single? However, a sturdy boy and a stout recovering mother are sufficient to a reasonable man. It would be truly poetic to look for more. I cannot tell you the agitation your letter occasioned me; 'tis the fate of your pen to express more at a stroke than others can convey in volumes, but never was it more strongly shewed than in this letter. My superannuated sight and the flutter of my spirits at the premature intelligence from East Lothian prevented my distinguishing an ornamental flourish your poetic quill had described in writing £:, which I took for a first figure. By this error my generous imagination bestowed just an additional hundred a year on my friend, and I dare honestly aver no hundred ever gave me so great pleasure. I revelled on the delightful idea, which accompanyed me above an hundred miles, when an unfortunate newspaper, which explained the late agmentation, created a suspicion, and a further inspection of the letter destroyed the golden dream, and forced me to retract the pleasing error which had made me so happy. I had blest Graham with as much fervor as the old Patriarch did Jacob when he tasted the savory meat. Isaac was deceived too, yet the blessing stuck; perhaps so will mine. I sincerely wish it for your sake, who knows not how good I am in doing so, for do you know he affronted me by wholly overlooking my letter. I could not have forgiven this, had he not proved he could not overlook what merited his notice by his attentions to you, which irrevocably secure him my best wishes, spite of the envy with which I read your pathetic address of thanks. Would I could have served you so as to have deserved such! But, since that can never be, may he continue to deserve them, if possible doubly, on whom they are now so feelingly bestowed. I have a mind surely singularly susceptible of the passion of envy, since many and oft have been the times when the mention of your mother has excited it in my heart. I hope, however, she was

not left you when the news reached you that would make her happy ; so you see, though envious, I am not malevolent. You might have told me if your brother's schemes of improvement lay in Annandale and promised success, but perhaps this is an encroaching question. If so, treat it, like Fintry, with silent contempt, and I shall, as I have done on that occasion, forget and forgive it, nay, perhaps even think it was only an act of grace and propriety. So you really admire Charlotte Smith ; so do I. I wish you admired *Zeluco* too, that I might plead favour with the author by telling him so, for I have been greatly in fault to him of late. How shall I thank you for remembering me so kindly amid all your hurry of business, while I, who am incapable of business, find it so difficult to remember the very friends that cling forever closest to my heart. Can you believe I have not wrot the Dr. since the letter I sent him by you, and which seemed wholly penned for the sake of another ; but there is a greatness of soul in that man which enables him to discover that the strongest mark of real esteem and regard is that confidence of friendship which inclines us to interest our friends in the fate of all we ourselves approve, and believe worthy of their approbation and friendship ; so that, while I wished to recommend your concerns to him, I'm sure I paid him the most acceptable compliment in my power, and I would not have had more satisfaction in it than he would have felt had it fallen in his power to serve you. The end of my paper now reminds me of bidding you farewell, and I am called to tea besides ; else I would have given you some lines I wrot some days ago, along with five shillings, which I could not well present, without a wrapper. At least something, perhaps the love of scribbling, told me so, and as it was an innocent amusement, I indulged myself in what hurt nobody else. Adieu.—Be ever certain of the best wishes of

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

I shall be here a fortnight at least ; so hope to hear.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Elliesland,
Dumfries.

MORHAM MAINS, 20*th Sept.* 1789.
[Franked by Kerr.]

My Dr. Sir—You tell me you sympathise with a state of mind most of your sex laugh at, and wish to write me a letter of comfort. You say this with your usual strength of expression, so forcibly that the very wish seems to accomplish its end, and changes the tenour of my spirits more than I thought had been

in the power of man or of, indeed, any event, unless the actual arrival of a letter from my dear Anton. Yet we are told no man knows himself; I may add nor woman neither, for my mood was become merry even before I reached your sweet consolatory verses, and I had discovered, contrary to your assertion, that religion, though perhaps the best, is not the only sweetener of our real or dreaded afflictions. There is what the doctors call a succedaneum, and I find it in the very sight of your hand on paper, which inspires something not rhyme-proof, for it sets me often a scribbling, when I daresay you must discover I have nothing on which to found the baseless fabrick of the vision. But that is all one; it amuses me, and, as an undoubted proof of my friendship, I hope pleases you. At least, I can honestly assure you nothing you could send me that brought me conviction of yours would fail of producing the most pleasing sensation of which the human mind is capable—far beyond the pictures of Raphael, the music of Handel, or, I believe, the very poetry of any author whatever, not excepting yourself. I intended writing you last night, but happening to lift the "Cotter's Saturday Night," it was impossible for me to close the book without reading it, tho' for the five hundred time. Do, I beg you, try if you can make anything now like it. I'm sure no one else I have ever seen can; but I'll say no more of it, or I could speak of nothing else, and I have much nonsense crowding to my pen in consequence of your writing me or of your not writing poor Jenny Little, for which you give a true female reason, because doing what is right is like beating hemp. Consider, my dear friend, we ought all to be very often made beat hemp, and put for life in the correction-house, or as they name it in Holland, the for-bettering house, to oblige us to do what reason approves or good-nature demands, whether it happens to coincide with the whim of the minute or not. Heaven knows I am not practising just now, or I should rather write poor Jenny myself than employ myself preaching duties to you, which you both know and, I am convinced, perform much better than ever I did or ever will do, unless Providence should wholly regenerate my nature. And if the new composition, with all its perfections, should not happen to hit the capricious fancy of some few of my former friends, I would beg and pray to resume the old woman, with all her imperfections, abating the blindness which prevents me from their converse on paper, and the deafness which diminishes the joy of meeting. But though I can hardly answer it, Lord be praised! I can read a letter, even concluding with a French compliment, with unspeakable delight,

where that very compliment breathes French freedom and English honesty or Scots kindness, which, let me acknowledge, is more congenial to my birth, and consequently dearer to my heart, than either the one or the other, notwithstanding the great novelty of the first. But now for verse, as ever since you told me how much you preferred it, I have liked rhyme and rhymers. Nay, not only so, but a friend of mine some time ago having unfortunately one day told me he hated poetry, I have never been able to do justice to the thousand good qualities he possesses ever since, but have half-hated him spite of the finest eyes in the world, and I believe one of the best hearts it contains. Were you an unmarried man, I would be ashamed to expose so much caprice, but I hope you know to value our sex with all their little amiable weaknesses, nay even consider our faults, like the spots and blemishes of a Mocha-stone, as so many beauties that increase our value. I read your Elegy and wrot :—

> The tears of fair Myra, once shed in despair,
> Now sweeten our garments and perfume our hair.
> The tears of Golconda cast orient day,
> Pour'd rich from the diamond's brilliant ray.
> . . . . . .

I read your last letter, and it mixing with something that went before it, produced as follows :—

> Tell me, my friend, thy comprehensive mind,
> From high Parnassus has explor'd mankind,
> View'd every object this wide world contains,
> Through the fine medium of poetic brains ;
> Try'd every doubt cold wisdom can suggest
> By the pure fire that warms a poet's breast,
> Why instinct only to poor brutes is given.
> . . . . . .

I take a new sheet and shall stain it, I think, by telling you there are proposals printed for publishing Mr. Mylne's[1] works. Now, as I mean to send you a copy of the book in a present when published, will you allow me to honour the subscription with your name ? I have only one objection, which is, the friends intend inscribing it to Henry the ninth,[2] who was at school with the author, who then wrote a poem addrest to him beginning with these lines.

Ode to Mr. Henry Dundas, written at the Grammar School at Dalkeith, by James Mylne, now farmer in E. Lothian :—

> Wilt thou remember then a friend,
> So far beneath thee plac'd by fate ?
> Away false fears that injure him !
> Hence low distrust of my desert !

While I deserve his love, no time
Shall wean me from my Harry's heart.
In youth yon oak and ivy joined,
Not equal they, yet close they grew ;
Time has their boughs so intertwin'd
No force can them dissever now.

Mr. Dundas kept up a correspondence with the poet through life, but, as far as I can hear, never did him any favour. He has indeed promised to assist one of his sons, and if he does, will have a better right than I would at present subscribe to for the credit of the friend or the book. Write me here, and tell me if I shall mark your name or only my own. I know they will wish yours if you don't think it can injure yourself to lend it ; I shall not be longer here than two weeks, so pray write soon if you don't find it too inconvenient a sacrifice to the happiness of, Dr. Sir, your sincere friend and humble sert., FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) James Mylne (see *antea*, p. 152, etc.). Mrs. Dunlop was here asking permission to add Burns's name to the list of subscribers for his poems, where it actually appeared. See Mrs. Dunlop's letter of 19th October, *postea*.

(2) "Henry the ninth" was Henry Dundas, treasurer of the Navy, Pitt's friend, his Grand Vizier for Scotland, who, there is reason to believe, was not well affected to Burns. See *Chambers*, vol. iii. p. 242, etc.

To BURNS.

FRAGMENT

Sent with a Crown to J. L.

Once Fate the lots of mortals cast ;
Monarchs came first, but poets last.
Jove called the synod of his gods
To rectify the partial odds :
The court was open'd by Apollo,
"Ye powers, if my advice you'd follow,
Since kings are cap't with crowns of gold,
A silver crown let poets hold."
Great Jove just then was reading Burns,
And ev'ry god had peeped by turns ;
So for the glory of Old Ayr,
The vote was put and carried fair.
As spoksman for the tunefull class
Up starts a stout and strapping lass ;
"Ye Antechristian Pagan powers,
What paultry barb'rous favours yours,
Ill suited to poetic brains,

Whose treasuries thousand worlds contains
Above each mercenary craft.
My tether-stake's a besom shaft,
And he who's favour'd most by you,
Like Trismegistus, holds a plough
(I wish 'twere better worth his hold),
(And beat from Oswald's purest gold)."
Her egis here Minerva shook,
And loud and wisely thus she spoke:
"Silver to age can comfort give,
Or make a lover's passion live;
Of worldly things ne'er make a pother,
Take this yourself or give't your mother."

And do you really think Charlotte Smith's elegy so superlative? I wish I had it to read again, for I must confess I did not even think it the best of her own works, but I dare say I must not have done it justice, since you honour it with so high a place in your esteem. Or may not even your taste be sometimes a little subject to whim? I hope your friendship is that my weak claim may retain it; or shall I rather trust to your gratitude for that sincere esteem with which I must ever remain, Dr. Sir, your obliged and obedient humble sert., FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

I beg to hear of the mother and child; ours are better and better hourly.

The following letter fills up the long gap in Burns's correspondence between his last of 6th September to Mrs. Dunlop and the "Whistle" letter of 16th October to Captain Riddel. It contains an earlier account of the origin of the ballad "The Five Carlins o' the South" than that sent to Graham in December, and this has of course not been before published in full. Captain Miller was returned in the election for the Dumfries Burghs to which the letter and ballad refer. It was he who in 1790 brought about the invitation from Perry of the *Morning Chronicle* to Burns to contribute to that journal.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Moreham Mains, near Haddington.

ELLISLAND, *2nd October* 1789.

I beg your pardon, dear Madam, for this coarse paper, but I have no other large enough for a letter to YOU. I have often said and thought that I had not time to write the letters I wished, when in fact, it was only the procrastinating, enfeebling tyranny of Indolence: now that excuse is literally true. Five days in the week, or four at least, I must be on horseback, and very fre-

quently ride thirty or forty miles ere I return; besides four different kinds of book-keeping to post every day. Still, Madam, be not afraid, as you are pleased to express so much satisfaction in my correspondence, that this additional hurry will in the least detach my heart from that friendship with which you have honored me, or even abridge my letters; though it must at times prevent the regularity of my answers to yours. I hold the epistles of a FRIEND to be the SACRAMENTS of Friendship. To deface or destroy the shortest Billet of yours would shock my feelings as glaring Sacriledge.

In this country we are just now Election-mad. Sir Jas. Johnston, the present Member for the Boroughs, has now opposite interests to the Great Man of this place, QUEENSBERRY.[1] His Grace is keenly attached to the Buff and blue Party: renegadoes and apostates are, you know, always keen. My Landlord's Son, a young Officer of twenty, is his Grace's creature, and is supported by the Foxites; Sir James, on the other hand, is backed by Ministerial influence. The Boroughs are much divided, and veer about with much uncertainty: the *weight* of the arguments of the several Candidates will determine their success. I tell you all this insignificant stuff to enable you to understand the following Ballad which I have just composed on the occasion. The Boroughs are Dumfries; Lochmaben, a small old town once the private residence of ROBT. BRUCE, and romantically situated among six or seven little lakes; Annan, Kircudbright and Sanquhar, near which is the old castle of the Crightons.

THE FIVE CARLINS O' THE SOUTH—A SCOTCH BALLAD[2]

Tune—Chevy Chase.

1

There was five carlins in the South, old women
They fell upon a scheme,
To send a lad to LONDON TOWN
To bring them tidings hame.

2

Not only bring them tidings hame,
But do their errands there;
And aiblins gowd and honor baith possibly
Might be that laddie's share.

3

There was MAGGY BY THE BANKS O' NITH,
A Dame wi' pride eneugh;
And MARJORY O' THE MONY LOCHS,
A Carlin auld and teugh:

4

And blinkin' BESS OF ANNANDALE,
That dwelt near Solway-side;
And WHISKY JEAN that took her gill
In GALLOWAY sae wide:

5

And black JOAN FRAE CRIGHTON-PEEL,
O' gipsey kith and kin:
Five wighter Carlins were na found stouter
The SOUTH CUNTRIE within.

6

To send a lad to LONDON TOWN
They met upon a day;
And mony a knight and mony a laird
This errand fain wad gae.

7

O mony a knight and mony a laird
This errand fain wad gae:
But nae ane could their fancy please,
O ne'er a ane but tway.

8

The first ane was a BELTED KNIGHT,
Bred of a Border-band;
And he wad gae to London town
Might nae man him withstand.

9

And he wad do their errands weel,
And meikle he wad say; much
And ilka ane about the COURT every
Wad bid to him, gudeday!

10

The neist cam' in a SODGER-YOUTH, next
And spak' wi' modest grace;
And he wad gae to LONDON TOWN,
If sae their pleasure was.

11

He wad na hecht them courtly gifts, promise
Nor meikle speech pretend;
But he wad hecht AN HONEST HEART
Wad ne'er desert his Friend.

12

Now whom to chuse and whom refuse,
At strife thir Carlins fell; these
For some had gentle folks to please,
And some wad please themsel.

13

Then out spak' mim-mou'd MEG O' NITH, prim Dumfries
And she spak' up wi' pride,
And she wad send the SODGER YOUTH
Whatever might betide.

14

For the AULD GUDEMAN O' LONDON COURT the king
She did na care a pin;
But she wad send this SODGER YOUTH,
To greet his ELDEST SON.

15

Then slow raise MARJORY O' THE LOCHS, Lochmaben
And wrinkled was her brow;
Her ancient weed was russet gray,
Her auld Scots heart was true.

16

The LONDON COURT set light by me,
I set as light by them:
The SODGER shall to LONDON gang,
To shat that COURT the same.

17

Then up sprang BESS OF ANNANDALE Annan
And swore a deadly aith,
Says, I will send the belted KNIGHT
Spite o' you Carlins baith.

18

Your far-off fowls hae feathers fair,
And fools o' change are fain;
But I hae try'd this BORDER KNIGHT,
I'll try him yet again.

19

Then WHISKY JEAN spak' o'er her drink, Kirkcudbright
Ye weel ken, kimmers a', gossips
The AULD GUDEMAN O' LONDON COURT
His back's been at the wa'.

20

And mony a friend that kissed his caup,
Is now a fremit wight; estranged
But it's ne'er be sae wi' WHISKY JEAN,
We'll send the BORDER KNIGHT.

21

Says BLACK JOAN FRAE CRIGHTON-PEEL, Sanquhar
A Carlin stoor and grim, austere
The AULD GUDEMAN or the YOUNG GUDEMAN
For me may sink or swim.

22

For fools will prate o' right and wrang,
While knaves laugh in their sleeve;
But wha' blaws best the horn shall win,
I'll spier nae Courtier's leave. ask

23

So how this sturt and strife may end
There's naebodie can tell:
God grant the king, and ilka man,
May look weel to himsel'.

I daresay, Madam, you are by this, compleatly sick of Ballads; else I might send you a new edition, much enlarged and improved, of DOCTOR M'GILL'S BALLAD. That, with some verses which I made on Captn. Grose, may be the subject of such another Scots-mile Epistle.

Your little squalling Godson goes on "improving in grace and in favour with God and with man." Parental partiality apart, he is in fact and very deed almost the finest boy I ever saw, and seems to say, by the vigorous tossings of his little limbs and the open manliness of his infant brow, that he will one day stand on the legs of INDEPENDANCE and hold up the face of AN HONEST MAN.

I am happy to hear that your departed Bard is to get justice done him in his poetic remains. It was surely verging to borders of Ceremony, your asking my permission to subscribe my Name. Your goodness, my honored friend, I can only acknowledge—I can never repay it. Adieu!—*Le bon Dieu vous soulage et soutient!!!*

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) A week or two after this Burns sent a copy of *The Whistle* to the Duke of Queensberry, the notorious "old Q." (1725–1819), apostrophising him as "a nobleman of the first rank and the first taste."

(2) There are considerable variations between the various MSS. of this ballad, of which four are known besides this one; the order of the stanzas also varies very much.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.

MORHAME MAINS, 19*th October* 1789.

What dreadful weather for the farmer! Yet I hope you have not given up your farm, and trust, as it is in an early, dry country,

you will not be ruined even by this year, which seems to bring all the plagues of Egypt on your brethren. What I see here and hear from Ayrshire makes me tremble for my country and my friends. Yet why must one fear fortune's frowns for those who have never enjoyed her smiles? Poets are sure above or below the cares of this evil world; so I will flatter myself you stand safe amid the general wreck and private loss this deluge threatens. On Sunday was se'nnight I saw, about eleven or twelve at night, an appearance I never saw before—a halo round the moon, not hazy nor close about her orb, but while she shone clear and bright in the middle of the dark blue firmament, there was a wide, outstretched, radiant circle seemed to my eye to employ a space equal to a third of the heavens—the breadth of the ring about equal to the diameter of the planet, and its silver light nearly as luminous as her own. The part within its circuit was a darker azure than the surrounding sky, so that its contrast with the *Bright Queen* in the center and the clear enclosure without was strikingly distinct and beautiful. Superstition says there must succeed forty days of rain; if so, thank God! fourteen of them are already past, during which, to be sure, the windows of Heaven has been opened, and I hope has discovered all your corn in the barn-yard, while here a great deal is still on foot, and still more springing a new crop in the field. Not the appearance in the sky was more unexpected to me than my own still appearing in East Lothian, but having asked a poor old Lieutenant with a broken leg to travel west with me, I waited for my chaise properly to convey him. Fate, which never seconds my benevolence, by the uncommonly severe harvest has prevented my son's sending for me; so I know not yet what I shall do with myself next fortnight, whether I shall remain here, go to Edr., or return home. Had Mrs. Dunlop been well this last week, I believe this would have been most probable, but she has been far otherwise, threatened with a complaint in her breast, alarming to a nurse, and attended with feverish symptoms which require my sick-nursing her with all the little skill I have. I hope Mrs. Burns has no such trouble with my little godson, of whom I am, and hope always to be, quite proud. I told Mr. Carfrae last day I was to give your name to Mr. Mylne's subscription. I cannot, however, allow you to honour him with the appellation of my Bard. Some of his things may be very well for an east country farmer, but to entitle them or their author to my peculiar approbation they must have borrowed the spirit of the west, the sentiments and fire in expressing them which some of my friends

could lend without reducing their own stock to an ordinary standard, and I must have been able to read them with that degree of enthusiasm a patriot Bard born in Ayrshire, and celebrating his and my native hero, could alone inspire. Besides, though I have been told poor Mylne was a very worthy man, I did not know him. He was not my friend, and my acquaintance with the writings of two men, whom I might naturally enough call my Dr. or my Bard, have taught me to feel the full force of whatever falls from the pen of a friend. We really esteem and believe our friends, because we feel ourselves really theirs, and truly flattered by their notice, which we almost come to persuade ourselves we deserve. The happiness that idea inspires adds point and animation to their every line, which not a sacred revelation delivered by another could possess in our estimation. This promised, don't suspect I should tire of anything you wrote, even were it possible it should be insipid in itself. Besides, I take some interest in Grose, and have great goodwill to M'Gill, whose book I don't perhaps find so much fault with as some others who have a greater taste for the mystical parts of religion. Its morality in this life and its immortality in the next go near to satisfy me, and allowing me that *bright reward* for which I have your poetical promise. I shall not quarrel about things beyond my comprehension and excentric from my wish or thoughts, one of which at this moment is to have a description of your farm and a plan of your house, that imagination may have a clue to follow your occupations as a husbandman at home and in the field; for, as I have often told you, I cannot with the same sylvane or pastoral delight pursue my friend in his new capacity. My airy fancy is checked in her approach by both your company and occupation, and involuntarily flees back to that field where she can follow the plough, rescue the mouse, or pick up the daisy, and admire that native genius which, placed there, has soared to heaven, and carries my soul along with it. Should I be doomed to lose every worldly prospect, and glean among the stooks [stacks of sheaves] for daily bread, I would read the Epistle to Davie, and find it sanctified and dignified the scene and situation. But, sleeping or waking, I have never for one moment yet been able to figure the other to myself an Exciseman. I therefore sincerely wish he may be soon promoted, and meantime may continue tax-man [tacksman = lessee] of Ellisland in the world's eye as well as in mine.

> With that bright glory inborn greatness brings,
> And rich in fellowship of gold with kings;

His civil-list ne'er need a grudged repair,
But prudence fill the coffers of his heir,
Then late bequeath to Wallace honour'd name,
Gay gilded trappings and high sounding fame
When he who dub'd him censor of mankind,
With mercy's sacred rod shall gauge his mind,
Translate the joys we've tasted from his verse,
And make him happier than you can rehearse.

FINIS.

By the by, I had a very rural dream last night. I thought I was at a country fair, where a friend of mine begg'd me to buy them a fairing. I made choice of a beautiful beechen, turned bowl, and on taking it in my hand, found it engraven with this motto, of which I beg to have your opinion, if a dream is worth an opinion—

Love, health, and hymen, crown life's little cup;
May genius taste, while friendship fills it up.

Since I begin to rave in rhyme, I shall give you a few lines more in the cover, in hope you will return the compliment. It will no doubt be giving gold for I don't know what—shall I say Congress notes? Yes, I will, for they went at last for all they were ever valued at, tho' perhaps in the present case that would still be *nothing*. The lines on the cover were wrot on seeing a sister of the late Lord ——,[1] who had never before appear'd since his death. There was to me something beyond words in her face, figure and expression. I dare not say what struck me; perhaps time may tell, yet I hope not. Is she not a sister of his, tho'——? Should you write me soon, address to William Kerr, Esq., Secretary of the Post Office. He will know where to find me, and not grudge the trouble of taking care of one letter for your sincere friend and humble sert., FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Probably Charles, 12th Lord Gray, who died in 1786. He left six sisters.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.

18th October 1789.

ON SEEING MISS G——

Gray was the morning of her life,
But black its after-day;
Though Heav'n itself beam'd in her eye,
It shot a humid ray.

Misfortune's bitter beating rain
  Sore soiled her early show,
Virtue innate, indignant glow'd
  Superiour to woe.

Her noble birth and nobler mind
  Are pourtray'd in her face,
May fate, like her, prove fair and kind,
  And grant her ev'ning grace.

May future peace make her forget
  The morning's cruel strife,
And wedlock's bondage bind her fast
  To all the joys of life.

Late may she reach the sacred port
  Of worth's eternal rest,
There find the friend that time last stole
  Dear treasure of her breast.

I cannot send this to Kerr, for he knows how negligent I have been to himself and all my other correspondents since I came here, nor can I tell them, as I can do you, that I could not write—I was so busy sewing shirts to my son of a web his wife had made for him; and let me boast my old eyes have served me to make six in one week, and were you to see the work you would own it better executed than any of the rhymes I send you. 'Tis a shame to force you to pay eight—nay, I fear, tenpence or a shilling for so much nonsense; yet I must keep measures with those with whom I have kept silence. Besides, you will have my letter a post sooner, by which I may possibly have time to receive an answer before I set out for home, if you write to Mr. Kerr's care very soon. Meanwhile, lest you should be angry at paying your beloved sovereign so dear for so worthless a packet, I have got three great men from Glasgow to pen the inclosed apology,[1] believing they could do it with more eloquent propriety than myself. I am sure to most people their style would be infinitely preferable to mine. Possibly you may have a worse taste. If so, God bless you with it, for it would certainly become my duty to endeavour to humour it as far as I could. Farewell.

(1) Enclosure apparently paper money, probably a £5 note.

Though he told Mr. Graham that he found the Excise business go a good deal smoother than he expected, Burns took badly with the overwhelming load of duties he had now assumed. He was over-fatigued, overworked, hurried, and only by degrees reconciling himself to his new business.

The following new letter to Mrs. Dunlop shows that the nervous breakdown which fell upon him before November was out was preluded by a bad cold. Haste characterised most of his letters of this period, and he let few out of his hands without a complaint of the hurry in which he was involved, though he selected the correspondents to whom he confided his woes and sufferings, just as he selected those to whom he affected a lightness of heart which assuredly he did not feel. It was April before he was able to sit down and write his friend a leisurely letter of the kind she liked.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
care of William Ker, Esq., Post Office, Edinburgh.

ELLISLAND, *8th November*[1] 1789.

If I were to write you, my dear honored Friend, in order to sport harmony of period or brilliancy of point, I could not chuse a more unfavorable moment than the present. I have somehow got a most violent cold; and in the stupid, disagreable predicament of a stuffed, aching head, and an unsound, sickly crasis, do I sit down to thank you for yours of the nineteenth [18th] of October, Prose, Verse, and whatever *else* was inclosed in it. God help a poor man! for if he take a pecuniary favor from a friend with that acquiescence which is natural to Poverty at finding so accommodating a thing, the poor devil is in the greatest danger of falling into an abjectness of soul equally incompatible with the independance of man and the dignity of Friendship; on the other hand, should he bristle up his feelings in irritated Manhood, he runs every chance of degrading his magnanimity into an exceptious pride, as different from true spirit as the vinegar acid of sour twopenny is from the racy smack of genuine October.

Your verses on Miss Gray are very pretty, but your motto on the beechen bowl is inimitably fine. You ask me to send you some Poetry in return: I shall send you a Song I made the other day, of which your opinion, as I am too much interested in the subject of it, to be a critic in the composition.

SONG

Thou lingering star, with lessening ray,
That lov'st to greet the early morn,
Again thou usher'st in the day
My Mary from my soul was torn;

O Mary ! dear, departed Shade !
Where is thy place of blissful rest ?
Seest thou thy Lover lowly laid ?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast ?

That sacred hour can I forget,
Can I forget the hallow'd grove
Where by the winding Ayr we met,
To live one day of Parting Love ?
Eternity can not efface
Those records dear of transports past ;
Thy image at our last embrace,
Ah, little thought we 'twas our last !

Ayr gurgling kiss'd his pebbled shore,
O'erhung with wild-woods, thickening, green ;
The fragrant birch and hawthorn hoar
Twin'd amorous round the raptur'd scene ;
The flowers sprang wanton to be prest,
The birds sang love on every spray,
Till too, too soon the glowing west
Proclaim'd the speed of winged day.

Still o'er these scenes my mem'ry wakes,
And fondly broods with miser-care :
Time but th' impression stronger makes,
As streams their channels deeper wear.
My Mary, dear, departed Shade !
Where is thy place of blissful rest ?
Seest thou thy Lover lowly laid ?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast ?

I have the honor to be, Madam, your oblidged humble servt.,
ROBT. BURNS.

(1) This date throws no light on the much-debated time of composition of "To Mary in Heaven," but the letter confirms Jean Armour's statement to John M'Diarmid, that when it was written Burns was "labouring under cold." Note that the title of this MS. is "A Song."

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Elliesland, Dumfries.

MORHAME, 25*th Novbr.* 1789.
[Franked by Kerr.]

Dr. Burns—

If my cares or my fears oppress me with pain,
Shall I torture my friends to hear me complain ?
No ! with poets on Pindus I'll carelessly stray,
And grow,chearful by seeing them happy and gay.
If to mourn like me they should ever incline,
The fire of their plaints draws the poison from mine.

There once was a Dr. my evils could cure,
For sorrow and pain fled the presence of Moore.
Now his parts or his fortunes have snatched him away
To London: where friendship oft cuts out of play.
Tho' his fame nor his talents I ne'er can o'ertake,
The taste he once formed must still float on his wake.
To Burns or to Little my thoughts be addrest,
The nymph and the swain by the Muses carest.
If fate has prov'd scanty in dealing their lot,
I pleased will remember that worth she's forgot.
To plough on a soil which the Muses have chose
Is renting a farm where one never can lose.
If my friendship one ray of pleasure impart,
'Tis repaid by ten thousand that crowd to my heart.
Keen wit thaws the chill blood that clots round my soul,
And froze like those oceans that bind the South Pole.
To you I'll rehearse what for her I compose,
Since it paints the deer scene where I love to repose,
That scene of calm peace where I ever could stray,
Where Cullen allows yet one week of delay.

TO JENNY LITTLE AT LOUDON CASTLE

O blest with young Poesy's fair dawning day,
Come light my October's dull wintery gray;
Since for knowledge, Dr. Jenny, to you I repair,
Tell how Time wynds his jack in your kitchens of Air,
How my friends in the parlour drive winter along;
Come, cheer up his cold with the warmth of your song.
If Heaven's fair promise like yours don't prove vain,
And your pears at the window all drop with the rain,
The garlands of love, these spring flowers do not fade,
Poor Hymen grow cold and frostbit in your shade.
Here the tooth-ach makes Lydia drop the soft showers,
While without doors the torrent in hurricanes pours:
But our storms and diseases blow o'er in a blink,
Our sun and good humour beam bright in a clink.
O'er the ridges the corn is brought ratt'ling home,
And the crack of the guns tell the gentlemen roam.
With pheasant and partridge the board is replete,
With pride and with joy the young murd'rer elate.
The apples that fill in fine fritters are seen,
And those feast in the hall that don't sport on the green.
At eve, if our spirits should chance to fall low,
Revive with a sillabube under the cow.
Or if for variety any repine,
They may have honest whysky or generous wine.
Nor does night by our fears her anguish reveal,
We all can sleep sound, for we've nothing to steal.
Tho' our windows be low and our doors be unbarred,
By our dogs and our swine all intruders are scared.
Here tho' geese as at Rome be all gabbling round
More heroic than they we heed not the sound.

'Tis ne'er dismal nor dark if our oyl be but good,
Lamps light us to sleep and the child to his food.
Harmless mirth at the heart and good cheer on the fork,
Our lives swim off thoughtless and light as their cork.
May the jack be perpetual, no change in the feof,
Still Lydia be happy in spite of her teeth.
From the heights of our wisdom oft Folly appears,
And wit grows no stronger by doubling our years.
To fortify happiness wrong we begin,
And by raising a wall oft shut a thief in.
With the weak eyes of foresight a rampart we trace
That entrenches a foe in the heart of the place.
With innocent glee let me lift to the song,
And cull a few friends from the best of the throng.
Jostle none from their road that on pleasure are bent,
But take with contentment what Heaven has sent.
For sake of the writer excuse this reply,
Remember the Muses' least scullion am I.

I expect to be in Edr. on my road home in a few days, from whence I shall send this, and long to hear you have thrown off all your complaints. I wish my rhymes could divert melancholy from your mind as yours has often done from mine. If they are weaker, I hope in God you don't need so strong a dose in youth as my latter years have required. But let me be thankful, since I am now easier than I could once ever have looked for, nor can I be ungrateful to you and your sister Coila, the sweetest of the Muses. Farewell. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

What strange creatures you men are! One needs only to ask you to do it, and you will immediately stop from the very thing your heart prompted. You involuntarily repeated your "Epitaph on Poor Robert Muir," but will not write it for me when I have asked it thrice. Indeed, I can hardly recollect one instance of your doing anything I ever bid you since I had the pleasure of seeing you first. Account for this if you can. I will punish you by not telling how I like your song, since my opinion of your writings is, if not flattering, at least partial. Adieu. Write me to Dunlop.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Ellisland, Dumfries.

LOUDOUN CASTLE, 11*th Decbr.* 1789.
[Franked by Kerr.]

Dr. Sir—I have been at home more than ten days, during which it has been no small down-draught on the pleasure I might have had in my return that I had not wrot you of my being come, so had no hope of hearing from you. I have oft repeated what I daily feel, that your letters are, I may say, my only foreign amuse-

ment, the only one for which my mind ever wanders beyond the limits of my own family, and where inclination, unprompted by duty, leads me in quest of something ever new, ever pleasing, ever rational, and where I have never been disappointed except by a letter being too long of coming. Even in that case, when I bethought myself from how much you must withdraw to write me, instead of blaming the delay, I felt a transport of gratitude and pleasure in considering that sacrifice of which you had found me worthy, or at least which you had had the good nature to make me amid domestic pleasures, domestic cares, the calls of necessary business and the avocations of taste or works of genius, which crowd your hours and might naturally so oft exclude my claim; were you not inimitably good to me,—a disinterested kindness for which I can never pretend to make the least return, unless by giving what it is not in one's power to withhold, an increase of esteem to that merit with which I thus became more and more acquainted. But while I am truly sensible of the value of your exertion in writing me, you will perhaps (if you have not been too much employed to miss me) be ready to alledge I have not followed your example, since you have now, I believe, enjoyed a longer respite than my pen has almost ever granted you since I first intruded on your retirement with the officious zeal of poetic admiration and the ambitious wish of drawing some partial notice, if by no other capacity, at least like the poor widow in Scripture, by my importunity. I have, like her, succeeded. You have been kind or polite enough to assure me you were the happier for my correspondence, and really wished its continuance, since which, like a true woman, I have been rather more remiss, at least not so anxiously, perhaps troublesomely, assiduous, lest you should escape my researches by change of place or plans of life that might prevent my ever being able to find or follow you; or put you in mind there existed such an insignificant individual among the thousands that had borne testimony to future times of the present estimation in which you stood before our poor county was deprived of its most famed production by your being transplanted from your native soil and early friendships. Indeed, I feared once you would not have stopt short of London. This reconciles me to your present distance, and I am pleased and proud to say we are still inhabitants of the same Kingdom, and that is not an impossible, tho' perhaps a too sanguine hope, that we may still sometimes meet now and then, before I make a farther remove than you have done, and try that great, irrevocable change which, come when it will, I trust will be more for the better than any you have to look

for either from the farm or excise, but where I likewise trust you shall be able to ferret me out without all the trouble it cost me to find out what was become of you when you quitted Edr. and was not at Mossgiel. I hope you will never be lost again either in this world or the next. You have many meaths [marks] now to point your path. Comets are tracked by the bright trail of departing glory for a little space, but it is quickly lost in air. Mrs. Burns by her charms and you by your love, I hope, have fixt one another in a more permanently durable shining state, and I trust little Wallace, or some of the rest of the brethren, may have in future reserve the happiness of perpetuating their father's fame and fortune, and rendering your name as famous on their own account as I am sure you would wish it from their merit or can make it by your own. I have been reading letters supposed of St. Everemont and Waller. The arguments of the poet are pure sophistry, yet, employed to reconcile an old man to banishment from his country and his friends, make me not only forgive but like the writer, who is breathing a sentiment I have ever abhorred. A citizen of the world is a term too thin and too broad for the basis of the human mind; 'tis like the fine fluid air fancyed to subsist beyond our atmosphere in that empyrean only fit to be inhabited by angels; there they may respire; but there its exalted purity would choke you or I, and leave us devoid of every sensibility useful to a lower sphere. In short, it is a language I never found pleasing, but in these letters attributed to the poet, and to which, perhaps for that very reason, I am partial; for I truly believe I shall never see any poet's letters in my life without remembering the many hours of pleasure I have derived from those of one who has been so good as address them to myself. These letters have likewise pointed out to me a comparative view, shall I say? of the French and English idiom, or of male and female writing, in the wonderful difference of modesty and delicacy of expression between the original and translation of the verses of the Duchess of Mazzarin on her leaving the world. Is that difference characteristic of the nations or the sex? I rather think only the last, for though I should in theory look for most poetry in women, I have never yet seen what I thought a female poet. I am even writing this in the house with Jenny Little, spite of your testimony in her favours, nay, I am giving it as my serious unaltered opinion, spite of the compliment you paid my own two *inimitable* lines, of which I was so unutterably vain that I instantly vowed to have them inserted on a dram cup which should be consecrated to the discoverer of their merit as a reward due to so much penetration or so much

partiality; for I believe I should find the last full more flattering than even the first to my vanity. But seldom are my wishes or designs accomplished. An unforseen accident came between me and my intention. The person was my friend. I used him as such. I turned the property vowed to his use to the gratification of the moment, preferred myself, and so became his debtor, which I dare say I may long remain before he distress me, or I forget his claim to those good wishes which will always live in my soul, and, should I grow rich enough, may perhaps still one day or other be engraven on a cup to grace his board, unlike enough to his capacious soul, but so much the fitter prototype of the donor, whose fate it has been to give or take very little all her life. Meantime, may that *bon Dieu* to whom you recommend her grant contentment, and ordain it so that that little never may become less, and may ever flow in such channels as he approves and she can never repent.

Remember you are in my debt. I have your promise for lines on Capt. Grose. But can I not produce your written obligation to send me *all you write?* Believe me, I will never abuse the trust, and no mortal will receive it with more delight when you don't find it too inconvenient to keep your word. Your political piece diverted me much, and quite charmed Jenny. Your "Mary" again quite charmed me, especially the last verse. Every time I read it I just feel the very effect it so beautifully described and so forcibly illustrates; but oh! my good friend, I hope it is only a fancy piece for your sake. When I read it, I forget to ask for your cold; every other complaint seems carried off in the deepning channel of one overpowering stream of long-felt sorrow, which, however, I hope is only poetic. Providence is commonly kind enough to order these matters better in the real course of nature, and though there is no doubt moments when we fancy the channel deepened to an unfathomable abyss, the truth is that time and nature is constantly filling it up, and smoothing the banks to an easie, nay in some degree a pleasant ascent, where they are not undermined by some guilty working of remorse—a situation from which I am convinced the native probity of your heart has through life secured you. For, however delicate minds of strong sensibility may frequently create horrors to themselves from retrospective views of their life, 'tis surely only for intentional guilt or injury the Great Judge will hold us accountable, or that we ought to indulge the only necessary and wholesome probings of self-reproach—a feeling which, I flatter myself, the mind alive to benevolence, devotion, real patriotism and enthusiastic fondness for one's friends

and family has no place for. This is the creed on which I rest, and this bids me hope for you and for myself too, that our woes, whatever they are or may be, shall dispel like a thunderstorm or the horrid mist I now sit in at Loudoun Castle, which, by the by, I think the dullest place in the world. There is a redundency of vegetation here that arrests the air, and reminds me of the ennui of the rich and great, where over-abundance becomes more oppressive than want itself. The trees are encumbered with their leaves, and the fox-glove grows fourteen foot high. In consequence every monster of the mind starts to a like gigantic stature, disturbs the present moment, and terrifys one for the future. I dare not remember or look at my poor Anthony through such a medium, nor can I forget him except to dwell upon another bugbear which threatens *in terrorem*, and if it approach, will require all my fortitude or perhaps more than I possess. But since many a cloud passes harmless over our heads, let us not fear the distant thunder, but trust with confidence the hand that directs the tempest, and who has so oft showed benefits our friend by means we thought fraught with little kindness at the time of application. The very post here does not go as I would have him; so that while I please myself in writing you, I know I cannot send my letter before I get to Dunlop, where I will beg your addressing your first leisure thoughts, and above all telling me you are well and happy, if truth permit you to say so. If not, throw off the gloom as I do just now; 'tis sunshine to my soul to fancy worth and genius could find such a resource in scribbling to me, as I do at this moment in believing you read my scrawls with the indulgence of a friend, and even have some impatient anxiety at this longer than ordinary delay of my telling you that, writing or silent, I am ever, with equal esteem and regard, Dr. Sir, your most obliged, humble sert. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

24th Decembr.

The most dreadful weather still keeps me here. May your Christmas be better than ours. I have been reading Falconer's *Shipwreck*—a new humiliation for the ladies. I beg you may compare the close of that poem with Charlotte Smith's Elegy, or with any female writing you ever saw, and glory you are a man. I fancy, while I weep over Arion, that I know him in real life. I figure also a Palemon to myself, but I would go twenty miles, if I had it in my power to do it with decency, to see William Falconer. Can you tell me is it he who is capt. of an East India ship? I shall rejoice to think it is. What a warmth of soul must he have

originally possest when the ocean was not able to quench it! Perhaps, Burns, such may be one day my poor Arion. I trace the resemblance in a thousand instances, and am resolved to have the book as a sacred remembrance I may brood over in secret, if it is not already out of print. Do write me what you think of this volume. Is my estimation fantastical, or does your judgment second mine? I hope it does, for I resolve, if I can find the *Shipwreck*, it shall be placed close by your side on my shelf, at least for one month, my inseparable friend and companion. I will turn to it when the tempest howls, and pray for the poor wanderers of the wave with double hope and double fervor. How dreadful is the havoc of this week on the west coast! My blood shudders to hear it, but still more to think how broad the wing of destruction may sweep, and what may await me from the east. Alas! I think not of the chirping bird or owrie [shivering] cattle. Almighty God guard my friends!

To Mrs. Dunlop.

Ellisland, 13*th December* 1789.

Many thanks, dear madam, for your sheet-full of rhymes. Though at present I am below the veriest prose, yet from you every thing pleases. I am groaning under the miseries of a diseased nervous system; a system the state of all others the most essential to our happiness—or the most productive of our misery. For now near three weeks I have been so ill with a nervous headache, that I have been obliged to give up for a time my excise-books, being scarce able to lift my head, much less to ride once a week over ten muir parishes. Lord! what is Man? To-day, in the luxuriance of health, exulting in the enjoyment of existence; in a few days, perhaps in a few hours, loaded with conscious painful being, counting the tardy pace of the lingering moments by the repercussions of anguish, and refusing or denied a comforter. Day follows night, and night comes after day, only to curse him with life which gives him no pleasure; and yet the awful, dark termination of that life is a something—perhaps Nothing—at which he recoils with still more horror.

> Tell us, ye dead; will none of you in pity
> Disclose the secret
> *What 'tis you are and we must shortly be?*
> 'Tis no matter:
> A little time will make us learn'd as you are.
> Blair's *Grave.*

Can it be possible that, when I resign this frail, feverish being,

I shall still find myself in conscious existence! When the last gasp of agony has announced that I am no more to those that knew me and the few who loved me; when the cold, stiffened, unconscious, ghastly corse is resigned into the earth, to be the prey of unsightly reptiles and to become in time a trodden clod, shall I yet be warm in life, seeing and seen, enjoying and enjoyed? Ye venerable sages and holy flamens, is there probability in your many conjectures, any truth in your many stories of another world beyond death; or are they all baseless visions and fabricated fables? If there is another life, it must be only for the just, the benevolent, the amiable and the humane; what a flattering idea, then, is a world to come! Would to God I as firmly believed it, as I ardently wish it! There I should meet an aged parent, now at rest from the many buffetings of an evil world against which he long and so bravely struggled. There I should meet the friend, the disinterested friend of my early life; the man who rejoiced to see me, because he loved me and could serve me. Muir! thy weaknesses were the aberrations of human nature, but thy heart glowed with everything generous, manly and noble; and if ever emanation from the All-good Being animated a human form, it was thine! There should I, with speechless agony of rapture, again recognise my lost, my ever dear Mary! whose bosom was fraught with truth, honor, constancy, and love.

> My Mary, dear departed shade!
> Where is thy place of heavenly rest?
> See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?
> Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

Jesus Christ, thou amiablest of characters! I trust thou art no impostor and that thy revelation of blissful scenes of existence beyond death and the grave is not one of the many impositions which time after time have been palmed on credulous mankind. I trust that in thee "shall all the families of the earth be blessed," by being yet connected together in a better world where every tie that bound heart to heart, in this state of existence, shall be, far beyond our present conceptions, more endearing.

I am a good deal inclined to think with those who maintain that what are called nervous affections are in fact diseases of the mind. I cannot reason, I cannot think; and but to you, I would not venture to write anything above an order to a cobbler. You have felt too much of the ills of life not to sympathize with a diseased wretch who is impaired more than half of any faculties he possessed. Your goodness will excuse this distracted scrawl

which the writer dare scarcely read, and which he would throw into the fire, were he able to write any thing better or indeed any thing at all.

I am glad you have put me on transcribing my departed friend's epitaph. Transcribing saves me the trouble of thinking.

EPITAPH ON R. MUIR

What man could esteem or what woman could love
Was he who lies under this sod;
If such Thou refusest admission above,
Then whom wilt Thou favour, Good God?

Rumour told me something of a son of yours who was returned from the East or West Indies. If you have gotten news from James or Anthony, it was cruel in you not to let me know; as I promise you, on the sincerity of a man who is weary of one world and anxious about another, that scarce any thing could give me so much pleasure as to hear of any good thing befalling my honored friend.

If you have a minute's leisure, take up your pen in pity to *le pauvre misérable.* R. B.

Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.

DUNLOP, 7 *Janry.* 1790.

My dear Sir—I had wrote you a letter from Loudoun Castle, and, on getting yours, instantly dispatched it by Edr. a few days ago, so that I hope it is before this reached you. Could it be of any use to cheer your drooping spirits, and make bad health for a moment more supportable than you felt it the hour before, it would give me a degree of joy few things beside could do, as it would be some kind of return for the inexpressible debt I lie under to you for that relief I have so often experienced from your pen when I had not power to listen to the tongues of my best friends. When a sore heart and a deaf ear made me insensible to their kindest attentions, and I received their goodness with that disgusting coldness which freezes the most earnest exertions of human regards, it pleased Providence to send your Muse to my assistance. I found your book, and luckily was inspired with, not a transient curiosity, but something like an earnest wish to see or be of some use to the author, if in my power. Your then situation seemed not to preclude that hope. I flattered myself with the idea of being able to achieve a thousand impossibilities in your behalf, and although I soon became fully sensible of their

unpracticability and my own incapacity to serve any body, yet I was at the same moment sensible of the full truth of your excellent axiom that, though we miss the wished for aim,

> Yet while the busy means are ply'd,
> They bring their own reward.

My mind was then in a state in which, had it long continued, my only refuge would inevitably have been a mad-house or a grave; nothing interested or amused me; all around me served to probe an wound whose recent stab was mortal to my peace, and had already ruined my health and benumbed my senses. The poignancy of your expression soothed my soul. It seemed suited to vent her own feelings; she adopted a language unheard before, and which, although she was wholly unable to speak, was the only one she had pleasure in hearing used by another, and I had no wish for five months so predominate as that of seeing for the first time one who appeared to be as unhappy as myself. I had hardly made good this point when I heard you were believed just dying of the same fever I had immediately before had so much difficulty to struggle through myself. This rendered the poems and their writer yet more interesting than ever, and led me to write in a way which begun a correspondence you have since been good enough to encourage, and from which I have often drawn much pleasure, and, I must also confess, sometimes no small portion of pain. The melancholy strain of your last has even been able to throw a damp on the greatest joy could have entered my breast, the glad tydings of my dear Anton's being alive and well. I fear my mind is of an ungrateful, discontented cast, for certain it is I can be dissatisfied with thousands happy around me, but never truly happy while one person in whom I take a particular interest is greatly distrest. Amongst all the old rubbish that crowded my brains thirty or forty years ago (for now they retain nothing long) was some jewels like the relicks dug up round the Vatican which are sometimes precious, such as those lines of Hutchison[1] on witchcraft, which remain graven on my heart:—

> Eternal King, is there an hour to make me greatly blest,
> When I shall have it in my power to succour the distrest?
> My heart alas! in vain o'erflows with useless tenderness.
> Why should I feel another's woes, yet cannot make them less?
> 'Tis not alas! reserved for me to ease the sighings of the poor,
> Nor set the prisoner free.

How oft have I repeated these lines with the enthusiasm of hope,

how oft taught them to my children instead of the Catechism? Now they are a corroding caustic eating away the substance like aquafortis etching copper, for the hope that sheathed my heart is gradually worn away like the beeswax that saves the plate from too wasting an impression. My power of being useful to those I love or esteem daily grows less; my consequence and interest in the world wears out as my years increase and my friends are removed from my side; even the pen which once soothed myself and pleased them, is torn by time from my trembling hand, and obscured from my thickening eye; nor can I long expect even to write a comforting scrawl to the person in the world I would wish most to please or serve. I see those I have admired, loved, and looked up to most laid in the dust, or brought by time or disease almost to my own level, and perhaps to drop before me. How dreadful were all this, could I not yet paint out to myself another and a fairer hope, a fresh landscape on the same plan, for benevolence alone can make us happy, either in practise or theory. I believe in the goodness of my God. I must and will also believe in the future existence of my own soul, and of others to whose goodness I shall still be indulged with the hope and endeavour of contributing, and as most conjoined to the goodness of the Creator and the wishes of my own soul. I will also believe those renovated beings will retain the memory and form of former friendship, and that we may be allowed still to choose those we wish to help up the pleasant ascent of improving bliss and growing perfection. I have just got a letter from Mr. Moore on business, wrot so indistinctly, from a severe inflammation in his eyes, as hardly to be legible. He begs I would write, and wishes much to hear from you, and to have your particular sentiments of *Zeluco*, for, tho' its success has been great, he is, I believe, half ashamed of the infamous villany of his hero, and afraid his friends may not enough separate such a fiction from the mind which could form it. He says you or I may still address letters for him to his son at his house, Clifford Street, which will go safe, notwithstanding Jack is at the regt. in Ireland. Dr. Burns, the Doctor, and I, being of an age, get down hill together, and may perhaps together climb the farther side of the ha-ha we all must shortly cross. What if some of us may be allowed to look a little after the score of years or two you may lag behind us in the ordinary course of nature, to chear the bed of sickness, to improve the glow of imagination, or add harmony to the flowing line; that is, to amuse your mind, spread your fame, or add to your fortune? If Wallace is your theme, perhaps the

awakening vanity of some of the name may induce them, if not to reward the poet, to gratify themselves by building up the decayed fabric of their ancestor's glory, and making the fortune of my poor little *Scanderbeg*,[2] who must one day represent his family, though never to enjoy that property sacrificed to irretrievable folly. Should it fail in this effect, still it were a subject worthy of yourself, and fit to stimulate every latent virtue in the mind of your son. This hope would give warmth to your style and energy to your sentiments no other poet could possess. Think, if I was alive, how happy you would make your friend ; if I was dead I should certainly come arrayed in immortal youth and beauty to visit your dreams, and inspire a brighter Vision, or bring a more *celestial garland* than ever you received from Coila. Does not the very idea revive your genius, and create an animating wish? Our lives have their ebbs and flows like the ocean. Your spirits will acquire a fuller spring-tide from their late depression, and your epithets bud forth with all the luxuriance of the approaching spring. I begin to be a little anxious about the last letter I sent you. I hope it has not missed its way. I would be very sorry, indeed, you thought me forgetful of so small, yet so flattering, a request, as that of hearing from me when you were ill and careless about the rest of the world. I shall be indeed uneasie if I don't hear from you soon, for my gloomy imagination will suggest that you are silent because not well enough to write, instead of believing the Scots Laureate is drinking in loyal inspiration for the New Year in healths to great George our King. Adieu. I shall drink and wish yours.

(1) Thomas Hutchinson, an Anglican clergyman (1698-1769), published several sermons and an essay on demoniacal possession.

(2) "Little Sandy Wallace."

Ad. Mr. Robt. Burns, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.

Dunlop, 20 *Janry.* 1790.

Dr. Burns—Why do you not write me? Is it your fault or mine, or does the cruelty of fortune put it out of your power? Are you become in so much worse health as not even to be able to tell me that is the case, or are you so ill as even to cease wishing I should know it? Were it not that I have lately seen your name to a publication in a newspaper[1] I should believe this

was the cause of your silence, and be very unhappy in thinking so. This circumstance makes me hope other ways; yet, if you are got tolerably well, you are surely grown much worse to me than formerly, and that is by no means a pleasing discovery. Don't, I beg you, let me dwell too long upon it, lest I grow sick too at the idea of losing an acquisition I was both fond and proud of acquiring; a friendship which raised me in my own esteem, and of which I flattered myself I was ascertained for the remainder of my life. But perhaps you have gone some little jaunt for your recovery, perhaps are hurried making up your business, perhaps some other of your family ill or overtaken with some of those events of life which require your assisting sympathy. I am certain you have not neglected me so long without a cause. I hope I have not furnished it myself, but would be greatly relieved to know it was not sickness or something very distressing to yourself that had made you so long forget a friend who regards you so much, and is always so much pleased to hear of or from you. I wrot you from Loudoun Castle, and sent my letter the day after I came home by Edr. I also wrot since by Stewarton. I don't know what I said in either, since the impulse of the moment ever governs my pen when it is lifted to write you. Yet, as I was truly vext at the complaining, melancholy state of your mind exprest in the strain of your former letter to myself, and much more so than I wished to say, perhaps these letters were not so natural as many I have wrote, and might please you less on that account. But should you not reprehend me when I seem wrong, rather than give up your friends for unintentional errors? If ever I commit one where you are concerned, Heaven and my own conscience are witness it must be so. Remember the words of your last is a "sick man weary of one world, and anxious about another"—the picture you think me suited to contemplate for a month together in the person of one whose life is inestimable to so many and so valuable to myself. Indeed, I assure you it is; nor would I have made any human being, not the creature I like worst upon earth, so uneasie for any money could have been given me, as I have felt myself in not hearing from you since the last representation you gave me of your health and spirits. But if you don't immediately answer this, I must remain persuaded you believe me either a Hottentot or a hypocrite, or that you are dead or dying, or seriously wish never to hear from me again; and, were I drowning, none of these are straws I would catch at. Do, then, present me some more comfortable hold, and quickly, for, like Cato, I am weary of conjecture.

Farewell, my friend. God grant you may have only been drinking the King's health or writing a New-Year-day ode. Don't convert my cup,[2] which was meant a memorial of kindness, into a Lethean draught. Adieu. Write, I beg you, or make some body else write for you. I have heard of both James and Anthony, but my pleasures never come unmixt.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Probably the "Prologue for Mr. George S. Sutherland," which was printed on 14th January in the *St. James's Chronicle and British Evening Post*, and possibly in the *Dumfries Journal.*

(2) Mrs. Dunlop had apparently had a cup made after the fashion of her dream (see *antea*, pp. 219, 221) and sent it to Burns. This was not of course the Wallace-cup, which was presented to the poet three years later.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 25*th January* 1790.

It has been owing to unremitting hurry of business that I have not written you, Madam, long ere now. My health is greatly better, and I now begin once more to share in satisfaction and enjoyment with the rest of my fellow-creatures.

Many thanks, my much-esteemed friend, for your kind letters: only, why will you make me run the risk of being contemptible and mercenary in my own eyes? When I pique myself on my independent spirit, I hope it is neither poetic license nor poetic rant; and I am so flattered with the honour you have done me, in making me your compeer in friendship and friendly correspondence, that I cannot, without pain and a degree of mortification, be reminded of the real inequality between our situations.

Most sincerely do I rejoice with you, dear Madam, in the good news of Anthony. Not only your anxiety about his fate, but my own esteem for such a noble, warm-hearted, manly young fellow, in the little I had of his acquaintance, has interested me deeply in his fortunes.

Falconer, the unfortunate author of the *Shipwreck*, that glorious poem which you so much admire, is no more. After weathering the dreadful catastrophe he so feelingly describes in his poem, and after weathering many hard gales of fortune, he went to the bottom with the *Aurora* frigate! I forget what part of Scotland had the honor of giving him birth,[1] but he was the

son of obscurity and misfortune. He was one of those daring adventurous spirits which Scotland beyond any other nation is remarkable for producing. Little does the fond mother think, as she hangs delighted over the sweet little leech at her bosom, where the poor fellow may hereafter wander and what may be his fate. I remember a stanza in an old Scottish ballad, which, notwithstanding its rude simplicity, speaks feelingly to the heart—

Little did my mother think,[2]
That day she cradled me,
What land I was to travel in,
Or what death I should die!

Old Scots songs are, you know, a favourite study and pursuit of mine, and now I am on that subject, allow me to give you two stanzas of another old simple ballad, which I am sure will please you. The catastrophe of the piece is a poor ruined female lamenting her fate. She concludes with the pathetic wish—

O that my father had ne'er on me smiled;
O that my mother had ne'er to me sung!
O that my cradle had never been rock'd;
But that I had died when I was young!

O that the grave it were my bed;
My blankets were my winding sheet;
The clocks and the worms my bedfellows a'; beetles
And O sae sound as I would sleep!

I do not remember in all my reading to have met with any thing more truly the language of misery than the exclamation in the last line. Misery is like love: to speak its language truly, the author must have felt it.

I am every day expecting the doctor to give your little godson the smallpox.[3] They are *rife* in the country, and I tremble for his fate. By the way, I cannot help congratulating you on his looks and spirit. Every person who sees him acknowledges him to be the finest, handsomest child he has ever seen. I am myself delighted with the manly swell of his little chest and a certain miniature dignity in the carriage of his head, and the glance of his fine black eye, which promise the undaunted gallantry of an independent mind.

I thought to have sent you some rhymes, but time forbids. I promise you poetry, until you are tired of it, next time I have the honor of assuring you how truly I am, Dear madam, your obliged and humble servant, R. B.

(1) Falconer was son of a barber in the Netherbow of Edinburgh.

(2) "The Queen's Maries."

(3) The operation referred to was of course inoculation.

Ad. Mr. Robt. Burns, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.

Dunlop, 16 *Feb.* 1790.

My dr. Sir—Since I had the favour of your last I have been very ill, tho' not very long so; yet it has been worse than a lady-like, lounging, lazy complaint, when nothing ails one; for I was forced, with however great reluctance, to call in the doctor, and get blooded; nor could even that set me to rights. For some days I had not even activity to write you, and thankfull you may be, since a sad scrawl you would have had of it, and on this big paper too—a large enough visitation in all conscience from an old woman when at the best but beyond poetic patience itself, had she been sick as well as grey-hair'd. Besides, you must pay for your torment too. No more writing gratis. I took the very last day of Kerr's being at Edr. to send you my last before he set off for London, where he may, for aught I know, remain some time, to the great hurt of my correspondence or of your purse; for yours is the only one he favours, and that from respect, I think, rather than love for your nine Mistresses. I don't remember if ever I introduced you to this friend of mine and benefactor of yours, for you are the only man in Scotland to whom he lends his connivance in cheating the Great G.R., and that from a disinterested veneration for your inspired profession, which he says ought to enjoy an universally acknowledged exemption from every oppression and a distinguishing superiority to which no other man ought to be held intituled. I don't positively know but he esteems you the more from seeing how often I write you, and did you know him as I do you, would think this no small advantage. Without the smallest shadow of those brilliant talents that commonly dazzle me, his soul, I truly think, is the purest and the best emanation ever sprang from that God whom he worships in spirit and in truth, and whose image he reveres and cherishes in its every form and fashion; foe to vice, but friend to man, he sees with the eye of benevolence and toleration every error but his own, if he has any, but really I think its own native goodness forever is dictating to his heart "Be thou perfect, as thy Father which is in Heaven is perfect." He eagerly obeys the

precept, is the guide and guardian of indigence and youth, the comforter of age and distress, and the shield of the oppressed. Nor does he arrogate the least merit from this, but in honest symplicity of virtue believes it were impossible to do less without being the worst of creatures alive, while in fact and deed he is the most exemplary of human beings, at least the most I ever happened to see. Perhaps, Burns, you may leave such a son, for his father was behind no man in parts or worth, but no more resembled his son than that son does you. I wish I possest your talents that I might do justice to either; then my letter would not only deserve to be read by you, but to be wrote in characters of gold for the imitation of future generations. Old Kerr was an oddity that struck every eye that looked at him with wonder, but every mind that analyzed him with esteem and affection. His son you may meet ten times, and never notice once; indeed, I know you have already met and overlooked him more than once, but it will not be my fault should that happen again. So I for the present bid him adieu, and beg leave to ask for your little boy. It was singular one post brought me accounts of his birth and that of a boy my son John has named for me. The same post again informed me of the projected inoculation of both, and I have been on the anxious look-out to hear the success of each, yet without writing to inquire for either; so much has my own complaints engrost me. Yesterday I heard my little grandchild was reprieved till another season, since which I have felt as it were a double portion of your concern, which I hope is by this lost in joy and gladness over his safety, and that you are so just to my friendship as to have wrot me all your agitations on so interesting an occasion, certain of my sympathy with every turn of the tide an affectionate parent is subjected to during the vicissitudes of that cruel distemper. Besides, the honour of being godmother to that child is one I plume myself so much upon that, for my own sake as well as yours, I must be strongly interested in his fate. I feel a pride in the compliment you have paid me to which I am perhaps but little intitled; yet, if I did not or cannot deserve it, Wallace once did, and of that I shall for once be allowed to avail myself. So I beg you may never mortify me by repeating that disparity of situation without which I fear I should never have had it in my power to fix your attention so far as to be favoured with either your correspondence or the name of your son,—distinctions which, I assure you, I feel more flattering than any other I now possess. You say you are to send me rhymes; send me what you will—the sentiments of your heart,

the arguments of your head, or the overflowings of your fancy. The gifts of friendship are welcome in whatever shape, and 'tis the priviledge of the poet to make them varied as the source from which they flow. Could you write a letter stupid as my own, while it was yours I would hug the treasure, and value myself on having a place in your remembrance when wit and harmony were forgotten, and you were in that solitary mood in which humankind naturally seek their God or their friend; in that despondent gloom in which I have many and many a time wrot to you when I could not guide the pen elsewhere, and when I now wonder how I could have the presumption to lift it familiarly to a man whose superiority ought to have held me at an awfull distance, had not somehow or other the poet's flowery wreath hid the frown of wisdom and the deadly darts of wit, and sent forth some fascinating allurement that made me approach fearless those shafts that keep the world in awe. A lady told me lately she was thankfull she was at another side of the country; she would not for the world have such a neighbour; nothing within a score of miles could escape your ridicule; was I not afraid? "No, madam," said I, "I should be conscious of never once wishing to provoke it by insolence or contempt, and for the pleasure of his laughing with me should gladly take my chance of his laughing at me. Nor did I believe I should be the first he would attack with serious ill-nature, as I would strive to give no ground for that, and a good-humoured jest I would have no objection to join in, altho' at my own expense, from one who warmth of fancy should interest to hide his faults and beautify his merit." I suppose you know whence that quotation comes, but I blushed in reading the author's address to the Muses when he tells them they smiled upon Burns "a proof they were not averse to indelicate turns." You see to what those subject themselves who express their approbation of your works, when their delicacy falls under the unanswerable censure of such a judge. I confess I felt disagreeable, both on your account and my own, and it was not lessened when I heard the world informed that my friend, on getting a thousand pounds, had forgot himself and his former friends. I was so little pleased with the ace of hearts that I mistook it for the knave, and doubted your possessing that knowledge of mankind he says goes to make a poet. I wish, however, you had another thousand to see if you would forget me too, in which case I should probably blame you as much as he does, without being as good-natured as to conclude by an apology. I have had a visit of English and Americans, with whom I was

pleased, and fell a-rhyming. I cannot send you the lines, as they contained some secret history I was not at liberty to betray, tho' I believe they are the first chimes I have penned since I wrot you first which were not submitted to your review, and I look on this as a kind of illicit trade I have been carrying on against your rights, while you are at the pains to read what I write. Farewell. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Do you know a Mr. Corbet in the excise? Could he be of any use to you in getting on? Pray, tell me. Adieu.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.

DUNLOP, *4th March* 1790.

Dr. Burns—Should a letter cost you a crown instead of a groat, I can no longer refuse myself the indulgence of writing you one, in spite of your silence. I will not believe but what you are pleased to hear from me, though you grudge purchasing it at the price of one of those sheets the world and myself, as far as my weak power could go, have taught you to estimate at so high a rate that nothing I can ever have to give in exchange will have the smallest right to be regarded as an equivalent. Yet, my friend, while I say so myself, I can hardly afford a single wish that you should adopt the same sentiment. If you are happy and giddy, 'tis but what a poet should be, and if in the delirium you have forgot me a while for the Muses, I can very readily forgive you, on condition that you entertain me afterwards with an account of your travels. For ought I know the ascent of Helicon may be as amusing and instructive as that of Mont Blanc; or if you don't think so, you may intitle your work, as one of the French authors does his, and instead of the "Flights of Fancy," call it the "Wanderings of the Heart and Mind," make it serious and contemplative, and write it in prose. What a sweet little nosegay did you once make me of a hare-bell and a fox-glove, a hawthorn and the sensitive plant; at another time an enchanting concert of gray plover and Æolus's harp floating its softly-breathing notes over a more solemn shaded landscape than Claude Lorrain ever drew. There is no pleasure the fine arts can give, at least that I have taste to receive, that I have not at times shared from your varied pen. Yet, believe me, the time I was most pleased was when you allowed, nay invited me for a moment to flatter myself that the writer of those diversified lucubrations actually felt himself the happier while he addrest them to me, and derived a sensation

of gratitude in his superiour soul from the reflection that providence had cast the term of two minds as unequal in their pitch and different in their pursuits as his and mine within the same century, and in sight of each other, though placed at a long, immeasurable distance, which no effort of mine can diminish. Yet I'm sure I should have been a worse creature and a far more unhappy one at this day had I never known by your works that such a being as the Bard existed, and had I not felt the consoling vanity of believing my approbation, my admiration and warmest applause were not wholly beneath his notice, nor my proffered friendship overlooked or received with mortifying contempt or indifference by one who appeared so worthy of universal esteem and intitled to choise his friends all the world over from every age, nation or situation, while that choise must in my opinion ennoble those it fell on much more than the vain decorations of a green or blue ribbon. Now, in the fertility of self-tormenting ideas one presents itself; my heart trembles at the suggestion that perhaps you are at this moment in all the misery of parental anguish over your little boy, wanting yourself that consolation you would wish to be enabled to bestow on an afflicted mother, and in the moment of distress no longer promise yourself relief in writing me. Should this be the case, what a check to my presumptive pride! I will throw my pen and paper in the fire, and never think of writing a friendly letter, or making a friend again as long as I live, for you will have convinced me the time is past, and that I have lost every talent to contribute to the ease of mind of those I most regard, in which case there is no human soul to whose kindness I could submit to be indebted, on whose duty I could endure to be a burthen, or from whom I would not beg of the Almighty to be removed before the cruel balance at our accompts fell so entirely on one side as to overwhelm me with unsufferable disgust at a life insipid to myself and insignificant to everything else. Indeed, I have had no very distant prospect of a release since I wrot you last. A rose fever came on with those symptoms that seem'd to bespeak an apoplexy. The Dr., alarmed, bled me twice in two days, and dozed me with medicines; my face was much swelled and inflamed; he pulled a tooth, as others had done eight before; the fever relented; the roses withered; and I am once more pretty well, reading *Pensées de Montaigne*. By the bye, that is a manner of printing I detest; I hope nobody will ever presume to garble a volume by publishing *Pensées de Burns*. 'Tis exposing one's faults commonly divested of all their beauties. I think I should feel it like hanging them in chains, yet I must transcribe

two of his for your criticism. "*La Poésie est un amusement propre aux femmes; c'est un art folâtre et badin, plein de subtilité et d'artifice, tout en plaisirs et tout en montre comme elles.*" This is the one; the other is: "*J'aime l'allure poétique à sauts et à gambades. C'est un art, comme dit Platon, léger, volage, démoniaque.*" You, who know it best, is this a proper definition of the most sublime of all human gifts? But I fancy neither Plato nor Montaigne were poets. For my part, I think 'tis, as Pope says of virtue, the very wish to have it is more joy than the attainment of other blessings the world languishes after. How happy have I been tracing some rhyme which you were afterwards condemned to read, as a musician hears a child scratch on a sixpenny fiddle, but which perhaps rejoiced me as much in its composition as your finest writings ever did you. But won't you think this allegiance profanation, and do you not devoutly believe that the finer texture of brain fit to form the *Winter* dirge must also be imprest with sensations of delight unfancyed by us lower mortals? I am afraid they are endowed with keener sense of pain, while lighter minds breathe more freely in the thin air of pleasure. When I sit down I meant to send you some verses on the King by an English farmer, and an Ode to Hope by Jenny Little, but my own poor prose has overflowed all my paper, and I will not extend my tyranny so far as to tax you for other people, lest it should make you more averse to pay the mulct I put upon you for myself. Do you ever expect to have any spare time from tax-gathering and farming, or if you had, would you have any inclination to revisit this part of the world? I wish to God you were a Collector of the Customs or a Baron of the Exchequer, that I might see you as often and as easily as I could wish. 'Tis hard one of the idle, sauntering sons of Parnassus should be eternally clogged with business, but this is one of the inextricable mazes of fate, perhaps, like others, for the best. For me I dare say it is, as when such a change may come in the revolution of time and things, I have not the impudence to believe I should have a letter in a year, far less a visit in two, unless you were admitted to pay it in the regions above, where by that time I expect to hold my levee, at which you will ever be a welcome guest, and contribute to the happiness of your entertainer; at least I hope such shall be the tenure of our future holding; otherwise I would give a small grassum[1] for even a perpetual tack [lease] where I had not an expectation of recognising and being recognised by those whose former intercourse had sweetened the past years of probation. Is this your creed? Or

are you one of those who reckon such a supposition a sin? If it is, Lord forgive me, for I cannot so much as wish to retract. The hope of finding those I already have, and may still lose, is perhaps to me the highest of Jove's Heavens, at least in anticipation. Write me a long letter, or I will grudge that I have wrot you this, and be less troublesome for the future; and tell me how your child is. Should he be ill, you cannot imagine how your silence would hurt me. I have not left room even to say in form your humble servt., FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Grassum = sum paid by a tenant to a landlord on entry upon a lease.

The following letter is of biographical interest for two reasons. It shows that Burns had conceived the plan of getting a foot-walk in the Excise considerably earlier than has hitherto been known; also that he aimed at a Port-Officership from the beginning, and at first had a preference for the Clyde—a wish of which nothing more is heard in the protracted negotiations which may be said to have begun at this date. The letter and subsequent ones on both sides prove, moreover, that Scott Douglas was wrong in assigning to October 1791 the letter from Burns to Corbet which he was the first to publish. This editor fixed his date by the fact that the first mention of Corbet occurs in a Burns letter of November 1790. But here we have the poet and Mrs. Dunlop corresponding about Corbet in the spring of the same year. Obviously his letter to Corbet was written in the autumn of this year, after he had seen the one which the Supervisor-General sent to Mrs. Dunlop in response to one from her to either his wife or himself. See *postea*.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House, Stewarton.

[ELLISLAND, *March* 1790.]

Though I have just one hour and a half to do any thing for myself in (I have always laid down my watch by me, and shall scribble away, d—l take the hindmost); yet you see I have begun at the very top of my fool's cap page; and how I shall fill the sheet, shall be, like many more important matters, left to time and chance. I never perused a friendly letter, not even from yourself, Madam, that gave me more pleasure than yours of the 4th inst., which I have just read. You talk of sending me a Poem

on the King by an English farmer, and an Ode to Hope by J. L., but I would rather have such another sheet of your Prose, than a second Poem on Achilles by Homer, or an Ode on Love by Sappho.

You kindly lament the distance between us: that distance may soon be lessened. My farm is a ruinous bargain, and would ruin me to abide by it. The Excise, notwithstanding all my objections to it, pleases me tolerably well: it is indeed my sole dependance. At Martinmass 1791, my rent rises £20 per Annum, and *then*, I am, on the maturest deliberation, determined to give it up; and still, even *then*, I shall think myself well quit, if I am no more than a hundred pounds out of pocket. So much for Farming! Would to God I had never engaged in it! I can have in the Excise-line what they call a foot-walk whenever I chuse; that is an appointment to a Division where I am under no necessity of keeping a horse. There is in every Sea-port town one or two Officers, called Port-Officers, whose income is at least seventy pounds per annum. I will petition Mr. Graham, and stretch all my interest to get one of these; and if possible on Clyde. Greenock and Port-Glasgow are both lucrative places in that way, and to them my views are bent. You formerly wrote me, if a Mr. Corbet in the Exise could be of use to me. If it is a Corbet who is what we call one of our General Supervisors, of which we have just two in Scotland, he can do every thing for me. Were he to interest himself properly for me, he could easily by Martinmass 1791 transport me to Port-Glasgow Port Division, which would be the ultimatum of my present Excise hopes. He is a Willm. Corbet, and has his home, I believe, somewhere about Stirling. One word more, and then to have done with this most ungracious subject; all this business of my farm, etc., is for your most private ear: it would be of considerable prejudice to me to have it known at present.

Your little Godson is quite recovered, and is, if possible, more thriving than ever; but alas! one of the servants has introduced the measles into the house, and I shall be very uneasy till we get them over.

I have made a very considerable acquisition in the acquaintance of a Mr. Sutherland, Manager of a company of Comedians at present in Dumfries. The following is a Prologue I made for his wife,[1] Mrs. Sutherland's benefit-night. You are to understand that he is getting a new Theatre built here, by subscription; and among his Subscribers are all the first Names in the country.

PROLOGUE FOR MRS. SUTHERLAND'S BENEFIT NIGHT AT DUMFRIES, *March 3rd*, 1790

What needs this din about the town o' Lon'on,
How this new Play and that new sang is comin'?
Why is outlandish stuff sae meikle courted? much
Does Nonsense mend, like Brandy, when imported?
Is there nae Poet, burning keen for fame,
Will bauldly try to gie us Plays at hame?
For Comedy abroad he need na toil,
A Knave and Fool are plants of every soil:
Nor need he stray as far as Rome or Greece,
To gather matter for a Serious Piece;
There's themes enow in Caledonian Story,
Might shew the Tragic Muse in a' her glory.
Is there no daring Bard will rise and tell,
How glorious Wallace stood, how hapless fell?
Where are the Muses fled that should produce
A Drama worthy of the name of Bruce?
How, on this Spot, he first unsheath'd the sword
'Gainst mighty England and her guilty Lord;
And after many a bloody, deathless doing,
Wrench'd his dear Country from the jaws of Ruin!
Oh, for a Shakspear or an Otway scene,
To paint the lovely, hapless Scotish Queen!
Vain even th' omnipotence of Female Charms,
'Gainst headlong, ruthless, mad Rebellion's arms:
She fell, but fell with spirit truly Roman,
To glut that direst foe—a vengeful Woman!
A woman, tho' the phrase may seem uncivil,
As able—and as Wicked as the Devil!!!

. . . . . .

As ye hae generous done, if a' the Land
Would take their native Muses by the hand;
Not only hear, but patronise, befriend them,
And where ye justly can commend, commend them;
And aiblins when they winna stand the test, perhaps
Wink hard, and say, the folks hae done their best;
Would a' the Land do this, then I'll be caution, security
Ye'd soon hae Poets o' the Scottish nation,
Would gar Fame blaw untill her trumpet crack,
And warsle Time and lay him on his back. wrestle with

. . . . . .

For us, and for our Stage, should ony spier, ask
"Whase aught thae chiels make a' this bustle here?" who owns,
My best leg foremost, I'll set up my brow, [fellows
We have the honor to belong to you (bowing to the Audience)!
And gratefu' still I trust ye'll ever find us,
For generous patronage and meikle kindness
We've got frae a' Professions, Setts, and Ranks:
God help us—we're but poor—ye'se get but thanks!

I hope this will find you quite recovered from that alarming disorder which, hostile to my happiness, threatened you so awefully. You will make me wish, as the Romans did of Augustus, that you had never been born, or had never died; for should you leave this world before me, it will give my heart-strings such a wrench that nothing in my after-life shall restore them to their proper tone. I hope Madame Henri is quite well again, and that the Goodwife of Morham-mains, little ones, etc., are going on, encreasing in favor with God and with Man. I am still very hurried. In May or June I shall be in Ayrshire, and may have an opportunity *in propria persona* of assuring you how much I have the honor to be, your dev. hum. servt., ROBT. BURNS.

(1) This confirms the inference drawn in the new *Chambers*, vol. iii. p. 151, from the letter of Burns to Provost Staig, there first published, that this prologue was written for Mrs. Sutherland, and not, as editors have hitherto assumed, for her husband. The last two couplets were replaced in the final version by six, mainly different.

Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.

DUNLOP, *6th April* 1790.

Dr. Sir—You are perhaps by now accusing me of the grossest carelessness in not enquiring after your measles, but I am no worse than all the world; only more taken up with my own family and my own concerns than even with those of my best friends. I have for some days past had a bright circle, such as you celebrated on New Year's Day was a twelvemonths, when, the Sovereign being sick, you chose to act as my Laureate. All my young folks now in Scotland have been about me this last fortnight. From Lady Wallace to my son John's little boy, I have presided amid four generations, and beside some others (the children too of the children of my early friends) have had Monsieur Henri and the *Goodwife of Morhame*, which, by the by, although a *title* which I pronounce with peculiar pleasure from a consciousness of its justice, I appropriate the use of wholly to myself. To say this to the Farmer of Ellisland would savour of insolence; were I to address it to a presuming, forward Exciseman, it would flow with the gall of indignant reprehension, but, pointed to my friend, and to that poet whose delicate soul measures all distinctions, and subdivides the smallest fractions into which pride, propriety, or even folly can split a hair, I will with honest freedom say his borrowing

the word hurt me, not for my own sake, but for yours. Dr. Burns, you will easily enter into my feelings on this occasion. Were ever your little ones in the childish frolics of youth to throw down one of your principal fences, would you not esteem more than all others the noble, generous spirit of that neighbour who, before you could repair your hedge, drove his cattle to the extremities of his own field, far from your vexatious slap [gap]? But forgive me if here I have said too much. I never mean, believe me, that a thorn of mine should scratch your little finger. Were it to wound my friend, I would bathe the hurt with as sincere a tear as ever woman shed, and I trust the balsam would remove every sense of the pain from his breast which my friendly candour could occasion. Yet I could not consider it as fair to myself or you to hold my tongue, while I felt I should have blushed at the sound of the epithet had you applied it in company. Can there ever be a more forcible proof of the power of custom than one's blushing with offended pride at receiving the most honourable apellation female merit can possibly deserve? Yet, while we live in the world, we must sail in its stream, however unpleasant the voyage. I am glad to hear you say Corbet can do all you want, as I had once an intimate connection with his wife, which by accident I hope just now to renew so far as possibly may put it in my power to procure his interest without troubling your other friends. But I suppose it would not be proper to mention your plan, or at least your name, immediately, since you say you might suffer by having it known just now. Perhaps my hope of serving you may prove quite vain, like many with which we frequently flatter ourselves in life, and which always vex me most where my friends are concerned. For myself, I have now neither views nor wishes; yet future prospects and present perspectives, too, affect me, sometimes extravagantly much, when those I love are included in the piece. I would be affectedly dead to vanity did I not tell you the sighs of the Muses were breathed over me when I was last ill in a very complimentary address from Jenny Little. As a proof of her penetration, the most touching lines told me your grief on that occasion and the general joy on my recovery. Here is my response:—

To Jenny Little in reply to hers on my being sick at sixty

A breeding sick Muse gaunting sore for a theme, yawning
May trick up a shadow and varnish a dream;

Bid fancy just paint the first stick she can find,
Or dress some old witch in the charms of the mind.

. . . . . .

Come then, my dr. Jenny, and hold down your head;
I'll bind it with joy—here's the Queen of the Mead.
Thus crown'd when you meet and shake hands on our plains,
When strength, wit, and sweetness embellish your strains,
Yet satire may rond those just meeds of your prime,
But unenvy'd I'll wear my wreath—of gray time.

You see wit, like love, may be run to his last shift, since I am forced to conclude with an ill-spelt pun to comfort me under the consciousness of this poverty. Let me indulge in the pride of having your permission to call myself, Dear Sir, your sincere friend and obedient humble sert., FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

I was not aware that I had scrawled my fourth page, and Kerr is still absent; so my heedlessness will cost a groat.

The best laid plans o' men and mice gang aft agley.

9th April.

I believe the devil is tethered at the back of my chair, for I think, if I know myself in the least, I am free to answer I never had a favourite scheme in my life that had not for its aim the encrease of happiness to some one or other of my fellow creatures who at the time I thought well of, sometimes indeed without much good reason, but that was their fault, not mine, if they deceived me; yet, when I was just rejoicing in the almost certain hope of success, how oft have I been disappointed by the most cross unforseen accident, as I dread is the case at present. I have this very moment a letter from Mrs. Corbet,[1] in which she tells me her husband is soon to be taken from his present line to be appointed to a Collector's office. I am as crusty at the intelligence as ever the Old Gentleman himself was; indeed, I defy even your poetical imagination to suggest a more scurvy trick of bad fortune than mine. Just when I had hunted out the very person able to do what I wanted, and saw, as I believed, the very moment when I could ask it with the strongest prospect of prevailing—at that instant for a clever, sensible, bustling man, who had been fighting up all his life, just to be seized with the whim of stepping a degree down from the station in which he could have effectually served my friend, and obliged me, is, to be sure, as tantalising a circumstance as ever one could be fretted with. I am only glad I had made no demand; yet I will not give out; so I will still endeavour to see how the land lies, and try if anything may yet be done before or after his purposed exchange. If I can make nothing of

it, it will only be one proof more added to many I have met of the insignificancy of old women in general and myself in particular. I shall, however, be at my wit's end about this before you be in this country, and shall then be able to tell you all about it. Sorry I am that this is the point to which your views must be directed, and that you should think your interests worsted by the prospect of a plan to which I really wished as much as lay in my power to attach you. Not even the prospect of your drawing so much nearer enables me to relinquish without infinite regret that respectability my ideas have ever attached to your present line of life. This is perhaps wholly a caprice, but it is one engrafted in my nature, and so deeply rooted as never to be erazed. I am, therefore, vext to find fate here run so counter to my inclinations. Indeed, everything goes cross with me to-day. I had taken by the hand a fair penitent whom I endeavoured to reclaim by every kind indulgence, and hoped I had succeeded, and placed her once more within the pale of credit and comfortable ease. I have just learned I was mistaken, and, believe me, it is a truly painful lesson. Besides this, we have had this forenoon an alarm of fire, which, tho' it has done no other mischief, has fluttered me a great deal. In short, I have wrot a vile letter, and ought perhaps to throw it in the fire instead of sending it to the post; but whatever I have said, I have certainly at some moment thought and addrest to you; it is therefore your property; you have a right to see it, and if any part displease you, commit it to the flames yourself, and forget but what I had done it before you received it. If you are not angry at me, write me how the children are, and if you still expect to be in Ayrshire soon, for I will not suppose it possible you can be there without seeing us here before you leave it again. Shall I understand your prologue as an engagement to furnish the theater with Scots pieces, or believe in that case it points to the order in which you would mean to introduce your subjects? But I am too near the end of my paper to ask a question and expect an answer, unless you use my letter like the witch's prayers, and begin it at the bottom, for you can never bestow attention otherways to such a length as I have spun. Be thankful, however, it will not cost you above twopence a page, and that is surely not dear for any verse you take a concern in or furnish subject for. Farewell. The servant waits; so I have not time to glance over the contents, but it don't signify.

(1) Mrs. Dunlop only postponed for a little her letter to Supervisor-General Corbet or his wife. The result will

be seen presently. It is almost incredible that Corbet should ever have contemplated descending from the rank of Supervisor-General to the post of Collector; probably Mrs. Dunlop misread her correspondent's letter.

To Mrs. Dunlop.

Ellisland, 10*th April* 1790.

I have just now, my ever-honored friend, enjoyed a very high luxury in reading a paper of the *Lounger*. You know my national prejudices. I had often read and admired the *Spectator*, *Adventurer*, *Rambler*, and *World;* but still with a certain regret that they were so thoroughly and entirely English. Alas! have I often said to myself, what are all the boasted advantages which my country reaps from the Union that can counterbalance the annihilation of her Independence and even her very name! I often repeat that couplet of my favourite poet, Goldsmith—

> States of native liberty possest,
> Tho' very poor, may yet be very blest.

Nothing can reconcile me to the common terms, "English ambassador, English court," etc. And I am out of all patience to see that equivocal character, Hastings, impeached by "the Commons of England." Tell me, my friend, is this weak prejudice? I believe in my conscience, such ideas as "my country; her independence; her honor; the illustrious names that mark the history of my native land," etc. I believe these, among your *men of the world*, men who in fact guide for the most part and govern our world, are looked on as so many modifications of wrong-headedness. They know the use of bawling out such terms, to rouse or lead THE RABBLE, but for their own private use, with almost all the *able statesmen* that ever existed, or now exist, when they talk of right and wrong, they only mean proper and improper; and their measure of conduct is not what they OUGHT, but what they DARE. For the truth of this I shall not ransack the history of nations, but appeal to one of the ablest judges of men, and himself one of the ablest men that ever lived—the celebrated Earl of Chesterfield. In fact, a man who could thoroughly control his vices whenever they interfered with his interests and could completely put on the appearance of every virtue as often as it suited his purpose is, on the Stanhopian plan, the *perfect man:* a man to lead nations. But are great abilities complete without a flaw and polished without a blemish, the standard of

human excellence? This is certainly the staunch opinion of *men of the world;* but I call on honor, virtue, and worth to give the Stygian doctrine a loud negative! However, this must be allowed, that if you abstract from man the idea of an existence beyond the grave, *then* the true measure of human conduct is *proper* and *improper:* Virtue and vice, as dispositions of the heart, are, in that case, of scarcely the same import and value to the world at large, as harmony and discord in the modifications of sound; and a delicate sense of honor, like a nice ear for music, though it may sometimes give the possessor an ecstasy unknown to the coarser organs of the herd, yet, considering the harsh gratings and inharmonic jars, in this ill-tuned state of being, it is odds but the individual would be as happy, and certainly would be as much respected by the true judges of society, as it would then stand, without either a good ear or a good heart.

You must know I have just met with the *Mirror* and *Lounger* for the first time, and I am quite in raptures with them; I should be glad to have your opinion of some of the papers. The one I have just read, *Lounger*, No. 61,[1] has cost me more honest tears than any thing I have read of a long time. Mackenzie has been called the Addison of the Scots, and, in my opinion, Addison would not be hurt at the comparison. If he has not Addison's exquisite humour, he as certainly outdoes him in the tender and the pathetic. His *Man of Feeling* (but I am not counsel-learned in the laws of criticism) I estimate as the first performance of the kind I ever saw. From what book, moral or even pious, will the susceptible young mind receive impressions more congenial to humanity and kindness, generosity and benevolence — in short, more of all that ennobles the soul to herself or endears her to others — than from the simple, affecting tale of poor Harley?

Still, with all my admiration of Mackenzie's writings, I do not know if they are the fittest reading for a young man who is about to set out, as the phrase is, to make his way into life. Do not you think, Madam, that among the few favored of Heaven in the structure of their minds (for such there certainly are) there may be a purity, a tenderness, a dignity, an elegance of soul, which are of no use, nay, in some degree absolutely disqualifying, for the truly important business of making a man's way into life? If I am not much mistaken, my gallant young friend, Anthony, is very much under these disqualifications; and for the young females of a family I could mention, well may they excite parental solicitude, for I, a common acquaintance, or, as my vanity will

have it, an humble friend, have often trembled for a turn of mind which may render them eminently happy—or peculiarly miserable !

I have been manufacturing some verses lately ; but as I have got the most hurried season of excise business over, I hope to have more leisure to transcribe any thing that may show how much I have the honor to be, Madam, Yours, etc. R. B.

(1) The paper is on attachments between masters and servants, and concludes with the story of Allan Bane.

From the date of the foregoing letter till the 14th of July is a blank in Burns biography ; that is to say, between his writing to Mrs. Dunlop on the 10th of April and his writing to Dr. Moore on the 14th of July—a space of three months—there is no record of his doings, either in extant letters or elsewhere. The six letters which follow—two from the poet and four from Mrs. Dunlop—throw at least a little light into the darkness.

Ad. Mr. Robt. Burns, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.

Dunlop, 23*rd April* 1790.

In the last miscellaneous epistle with which you favoured me you tell me, my Dr. Sir, you wish to have my opinion of some of the papers of the *Mirror* and *Lounger* which you add you had just met for the first time and glory in as being wholly Scots. I had imagined a still nearer concern in them, having formerly regarded some of them as not only the produce of my country but of my friend. Many papers of the *Mirror* I had read with accumulated pleasure when, after your telling me they were the emanations of minds unknown to the world, and who had never before appeared in print, I fancyed to myself I could trace the sentiments of my informer in different places of those volumes to which you now express partial favour, and for which, I am convinced, every thinking mind or feeling heart will be interested. As to the *Lounger* you are bound by gratitude for the kind share the author takes in your success and the ingenious apology he makes for a fault which I trust you run no risque of repeating (and which was the only one I have ever yet been able to detect in your writings) to do him at least ample justice. And I do think he needs no more to recommend him to a place in any lady's library who regards morality and her country, or whose character is formed by nature to those tendernesses and delicacies education and books are intended to inspire. I think I recollect

and admire the particular paper to which you allude, yet I am not certain, nor have I the book to turn to. I am almost ashamed to say why I have not, but 'tis the truth, so out it shall come. You shall behold me such as I am, with all my inconsistancies, faults and caprices about me, and then should you have, as you probably must, fourty years to live after I am dead, when you pick them out of my letters, they will perhaps console you for the loss of their owner, whose only remaining attribute, I fear, must be the sincere admiration with which she contemplates genius and the perfect faith she has in the integrity and virtue of that heart over which she sees unbounded talents preside. Let this, dr. Burns, plead my excuse with you when I confess that I am the most miserable economist of my time and my money, so that I can hardly ever command as much of either as are equal even to those laudable calls which inclination prompts me to obey. The price of those volumes is often beyond my reach. It actually is so at this moment, nor, if I had them, can I absolutely say I would not squander time so far as not to read them, although the earnest wish to do it might withdraw my attention from the first duties of my life, which I would perform with listless langour while my heart was elsewhere. 'Tis thus I often do nothing because I wish to write to my friends; yet I do not even that either, and sometimes when I do I had better have let it alone. Witness my last to you, which was a true outbursting of the spleen, for which I dare say you despise if not hate me. I am sure, if you do, I shall not presume to accuse you of injustice, but only wish I had been endowed with that worldly wisdom, often denied a woman, of holding my tongue when I was out of humour with myself and all around me, and not throwing away in a moment that esteem I had been long and assiduously endeavouring to acquire, and on which no mortal can set a truer value. Could you have seen me read your last kind, confidential letter, I should not need make this profession. You would then have known that, when other ladies take ether or peppermint drops, my soul knows no reviving cordial like the receipt of a letter from a friend who seems convinced he is addressing himself to one who is interested in him, and for whom he has value enough to wish sincerely she should continue so. Nothing ever flattered me more than your considering me in that light. Give me, then, credit for that candour that would not cheat you out of your approbation, though I esteem it a treasure beyond my capacity to purchase at an equal price, and for which I can only repay you, as we do the Grace of God, with thankfullness. Yet,

believe me, could I contribute in the very smallest degree to your happiness or the bettering of your situation by any effort of mine, it would give me infinite pleasure. I have been endeavouring to secure Corbet in your interest, and once more hope to succeed through the mediation of a very worthy friend of mine and unknown admirer of yours, who, I believe, has everything to say with him, and will be much in earnest to oblige me. I told him he could never do it more than by soliciting his friend in my behalf for such a place against such a time; that I would not then name my man, but he was one known to the world and favoured by some of the Commissioners; that his real character would discredit no recommendation, and his estimation amongst the worthiest part of mankind do honour to any one who should be of use to him; that the favour done him I should consider as more than to myself. To this I do not expect any answere for a month, before which I hope I shall hear from you saying whether you approve what I have done or wish me to add anything else to what I have already suggested. I hope also to hear how you all are, to see the new born verses, and to know when I may have a chance of seeing their father. This last I must especially beg to know, lest I should be from home when you were so good as intend being our way, which would be a disappointment for which I would be inconsolable. Nay, I have even the vanity to fancy it would be some kind of one to yourself. Pray, if I am deceived, do not take the trouble of informing me. Better I would not lose this illusion for the finest shall ever be produced by any tragic Muse, your own not excepted. Speaking of tragedy, do you know poor Jenny Little has cut her foot on a broken bottle, that it was feared she would be obliged to have it amputated, and, what was still worse, I, imagining it a trifle, laughed at her about it? Do you not pity me? I am sure I have pityed myself ever since I heard how ill the poor girl has been, and almost vowed never to laugh again—at least when I did not know what I was laughing at. But this, I suppose, is a vow you have too much sense ever to need making. I will look for your verses next time you write. I forget if I sent you some of mine to Jenny ending, I think, with a pun about old *Time*, to which let me (who entered on my sixtieth year some days ago) add,

> Unsear'd by his scythe, your lines I'll peruse,
> And grow happy and hearty at sight of your Muse.

Adieu. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

I don't yet hear of Kerr's return.

24th.

My hand shakes. I have just witnessed a tragedy. Remorse acted the first part, for I am not certain it was not a feigned one; yet it was so much to the life, it harrowed up my very soul, and all nature exclaimed within me "Why, gracious God, is the sacred precept 'Forgive thy brother not seven, but seventy and seven times' not extended likeways to the blamable, unfortunate sister who offends? Why does cruel custom constrain us to withdraw countenance, advice and support from those who want them most, the guilty, helpless and forlorn?" Such, however, is the tax propriety and decency sometimes demand, and which is perhaps justly due to society, with whatever reluctancy it may be paid by one who must act as the mistress of a family and the mother of grown-up daughters, the monitress of vice, as well as the encourager of virtue. How painfull the one and how pleasant the other part when it proves successful, how tantalizing when it does not, and the attempt subjects us to all the ridicule of folly and ill-nature, which I at this moment anticipate, but hardly stand in awe of—I am so much hurt by the disappointment of a laudable pleasure I had flattered myself with being entitled to enjoy at the expense of getting the laugh against me.

Ad. Mr. R. Burns, Elliesland,
Dumfries.

[Franked by Kerr.]

I have just heard Kerr is come home, and, eager to embrace the advantage of this intelligence, fly to write you without minding the size of my paper. Were it a sheet large as your capacious soul, experience has already shewed you I might perhaps still find it unequal to contain all I would wish to huddle into it, or rather what my hand would just trace without the intervention of a thought or a wish about the matter. There is a confused fermentation often working in my mind when I lift the pen to a friend; I know not myself whether it is the cream or the scum that may cast up; chance alone must determine; 'tis enough that choise points to whom the reverie shall be addrest. If to one I truly esteem, and to whom I flatter myself a scrawl from me, of whatever kind, is always welcome, farewell fear and hesitation, come reason or come rhyme, or be it neither, while I am blacking the paper, it is prolonging converse under the only circumstance that makes it forever interesting and agreeable. What are the pleasures of levity, or of philosophy, of science, business or amusement, to those little, insignificant, trifling nothings, which

one only says where they would always wish to be speaking or to be hearing, and which in reality are not worth ever being said at all were they unaccompanied with that unspeakable relisher which renders them more palatable than even the heavenly inspirations of the Muses. Tell me, my friend, with that honest sincerity I truly love, and which no man in the world has more the appearance of possessing, would you be most flattered by the eagerness that tore up a letter from you with anxious desire of reading a beautiful poem or an elegant essay, such as all the world knows you can write, or by that quiet silent pleasure which pocketed it up to be, like the hermit's repast, enjoyed alone, and, like his holy reliques, only sacred because it was yours? Can the pride of an author be thus satisfied when their composition becomes but a secondary recommendation of the productions of his pen? I hope so, for I confess 'tis thus I treat yours, and, independent of every other quality, invariably find the kindest, most friendly letters the very best you write me. For my own sake I hope you have a little of the same taste, conscious as I must be that, if mine are not valued on this account, a superiour mind, hourly conversant with its own ideas, must find it a tedious interruption to peruse them. Nor could it be an apology for breaking in upon you to tell myself they cost you nothing, tho' I assure you I find even that an encouragement, as you may guess by the haste with which I have seized the first day I knew of Mr. Kerr's return to set a scribbling, after having given you a longer respite than I had ever prevailed upon myself to do since you were first kind or polite enough to express pleasure in hearing from me—a pleasure, however, which female vanity itself cannot magnify into a comparison of what I have in writing and being allowed to believe I am paying *you* an acceptable compliment in doing it. This is the circumstance of my present life that does most to reconcile me to myself. If misfortune overtakes me, or the neglect of others seems mortifying, and suggests a thought that I have lived too long, I instantly oppose to this the proud self-confidence of being able still to boast a distinguished share in the regard of the very man my age or country has produced whose correspondence and approbation could have promised me most pleasure. Yet don't think I enjoy this gratis. You know not the price it costs me; the postage is really enormous, no less than the relish of my books and my friends, who lose much in the comparison. The works of one poet and the epistles of one friend pours a kind of insipidity over many who once could please, and my pen, redundant in trifling to one, forgets its duty to all

the world besides. Even my dear Anthony complains of never hearing from me, and my carelessness re-echos from China, whence one ship has just imported six letters, in every one of which he repeats his never having got a single line from Britain since he crost the ocean. Yet this is not entirely my fault neither. I'm sure you would despise me if it were so. Tho' very blameable, you must not believe me so very bad. Poor fellow! he is gone from Bombay, a mate, tho' with better hopes, and thinks he has found friends. God knows if he shall likeways find fortune. Her favours are as unstable and as blindly bestowed in India as in Europe. Some of my friends there have equally felt her smiles and frowns; had to-day £50,000, to-morrow nothing. Should such be his lot, may all sovereign wisdom fit him for both situations, and render both preparatory to that great end for which Almighty goodness created him—to be good and to be happy here or hereafter. I have been reading Necker's *Religious Opinions*,[1] and I have done it with singular pleasure. They are the breathings of a mind at once great and good, the warm glow of philanthropy and that generous benevolence, which makes a man crowned with rank, wealth, and royal favour forget the indulgence of the few, and in the fervour of his soul espouse the cause of humanity, misery, and the many sons of oppression and distress who have no shelter from arrogant injustice but what hope points out for them in the bosom of their God. How feelingly he recommends faith and devotion to all stations, from the king to the beggar, and how loudly does he call every passion to his aid! I am not enough metaphysician to determine if he speaks conviction to the head of man, but I am sure he employs that irresistible eloquence which sweeps all before it, and penetrates the inmost recesses of at least one woman's heart. I wish you would read him, dr. Burns, and tell me how you like the sentiments of the great financier. He does not write like a sectary, hardly like a Christian, but yet, while I read him, I like better my God, my neighbour, Monsieur Necker and myself. In short, I dislike nothing but the compliment he pays Mr. Pitt, whose character, I am afraid, is too cold to deserve it. He points out with rapture the sublime wonders of astronomy, as greatly suited to elevate the mind to the contemplation of the great Creator of the universe. I have in my life met about half a dozen of men, the greatness of whose talents and the goodness of whose hearts had a still more exalted effect upon my meditations than the study of the starry frame. Alas! I must now look up to them beyond the firmament and all the bounds of nature and of time.

No doubt such still exist in the world, but not for me the eyes of my mind, as well as those of my head, are grown too dull to discover those who advance so far behind me. The years that wicked old fellow Time has mowed down serve to thatch an impenetrable screen betwixt me and the present generation, and indeed the noise and chatter they make gives me as little temptation as they can have to look through it. Still, let me thank Heaven for one consolation, since it is yet given me to know there still lives a poet who, had he been acquainted with my former friends, had he regarded them as I did with the same gratitude, esteem and tender affection, would have sung their requiem in strains capable of exalting my soul like the music of the spheres. Perhaps he may one day even deign to strike his harp, and pour the note of woe over my grave. I do not know if it would soothe the departed spirit, but sure I am the very idea that such a thing is possible chears greatly that spirit in her present abode. Nay, after all, dr. Burns, I would not wish an epitaph even of your composition on my tombstone, should vanity ever give me one, but to believe real grief would transcribe it on the heart of the poet is the sweetest gratification to my pride and the most enchanting illusion fancy is able to form. Remember, too, a late poetic expression of your own furnished a very pretty base for this airy structure; so you are not entitled to laugh at me for the supposition, however absurd it might appear to others. Poor Jenny Little has met an unfortunate accident, which once threatened the loss, if not of life, at least of a limb. I wish her absolute cure be yet a certain expectation, as I understand she still walks with much difficulty. I wish we were ascertained a little time would remove this. Health of body and serenity of mind are distinctions to which it will be very hard if her character and talents cannot attain, since denied the more glaring advantages of life. I have been wandering, since I wrot you last, to the verge of our county to visit strangers (at Skelmorlie [2]), a thing I have not done for twenty years before. 'Tis a charming place. The view of the water and hills in perspective is magnificent; the height on which it stands stupendous; the paths that wind through woods, rocks, and an infinite profusion of, primroses and violets, are wildly romantic; the farms behind it seem by nature as well as by name to be "The back of the world," and the little improvements appear as if designed by the hand of love to hide him from that world on which he had turned his back. Its present mistress is a lovely American, whose manner of life, whether you consider her figure, her dress, person, or gentle, insinuating address, the

elegance of her table, or the sweet, unassuming mildness of her character, strikes one with contracted or rather diminished beauty, resembling the delicacy, luster, and elegance of a fine miniature enamelled picture. Whenever I looked at her, I could not help thinking of American virtues and simplicity epitomized and sent across the Atlantic to gain British love and imitation. Her husband seems extremly fond of her, braves for her sake solitude, and renounces vanity with a degree of fortitude love alone knows to lend; nor do I know if even he can lend it long; yet I hope for the sake of both he can and will. They were at so much pains to make me happy that I most sincerely wish they may be every day more and more so themselves, and it would please me much to find my presence could now and then contribute to make them feel an encrease to the pleasures of their retreat. Perhaps, should I renew the compliment of visiting them again in the summer '92, I may find myself rewarded by the familiar priviledge of introducing a friend who would taste and enhance the beauties of the place and the pleasures of the society, whose presence would to me at least throw double enjoyment on the gayest landscape nature could produce, and improve the most select party chance or even friendship herself could form. Should Fate and Corbet order matters as perhaps they may, and as I shall hope, if you wish it, till then, they will. Have I excited your curiosity so far that two years hence you would be willing to gratify it by bestowing the trouble of an extended walk of ten miles to see at the end of it Skelmorlie and your old friend, setting wholly aside any attraction a beautiful young American may have for a Scots married Bard, by then I suppose the father of half a dozen children, in each of whom paternal partiality may discover more charms than even she can display. Tho' Mr. Henri, who accompany'd me there, says she is the loveliest woman upon earth, my language is not quite so hyperbolical. 'Tis only a little poetic *like yours*, but this comparison, I'm afraid, is more of hyperbole than all he can say of Mrs. Harrison. Forgive it; accident dropt it from my pen, as it may do many words of which I feel not the force before, nor even always after they are wrote. This was too extravagantly conceited to escape correction or contempt; had I omitted the one you must have conferred the other.

It is long since I promised you a Ballad on the King. Here it is:—

I sing of George's golden days: not George the First or Second;
For they deserved the Nation's praise: with them this can't be reckon'd.
For he above compare is known: God bless him he so wise is,

That every day he mounts the throne, his wisdom higher rises.
Yanky doodle ; who's the noodle ; bonny Scotsmen boast him,
Every Tory, sing his glory, and in bumpers toast him.
The rebels over yonder main, they play the very devil,
They prime, they fire, they load again, with rifles most uncivil.
Who dare refuse a paultry tax, and swear he dare not cheat them,
Will all be glad to turn their backs when Mighty George can beat them.
What tho' Britannia sees her sons, confounded and divided,
And by Monsieur and Spanish Dons, insulted and derided.
Tho' taxes rise and trade decays, and millions are expended,
On George with gratitude we gaze, by his right arm defended.
Then here's a health to George the Third, who heightens England's glory,
If you will take a poet's word, or trust a loyal Tory.
Then halloa, boys, to George's name, and drink his health till mellow,
Old Time may travel till he's lame before he find his fellow.

So much for the spirit of the landed interest in England. I am pleased to see a little rising in the Chamber of Commerce of Scotland, and that they will at least speak for their bread if not for their beer, which they so tamely sacrificed last year. But, talking of kings, allow me just to add that I am as happy as a queen in the hope of your paying us a visit this summer. I hope no storm, as in former times, may prevent your kind intention ; yet pray do write me when you think it may be, lest I should be from home ; for I should regret much if what happens so seldom should fall again on so unfortunate a time as make me miss seeing you, when the distance leaves no prospect of making up the loss for heaven knows how long. The post calls loudly for this, nor, I daresay, can you even pretend now to be sorry that I am obliged to bid you adieu, tho' I assure you 'tis always with reluctance I write or pronounce farewell when addrest to you by, Dr. Sir, Your much obliged friend and obedient humble sert.,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

DUNLOP, 15*th May* 1790.

(1) *De l'Importance des opinions religieuses* (1788) by Necker, the great French financier (1732-1804).

(2) The proprietor of Skelmorlie from 1783 was Hugh Montgomerie, afterwards twelfth Earl of Eglinton.

To Mrs. DUNLOP. ELLISLAND, *6th June* 1790.

It is by no means impossible, my dear and much-honored Friend, but that you may see me, ere this reach you.[1] A particular and rather disagreeable business calls me to Ayrshire—disagreeable in every thing, but in that I hope it shall give me the pleasure

of being at Dunlop and seeing you there. Believe me, Madam, Heaven has few pleasures with which I am acquainted, equal to what I shall have on the seventeenth currt. if not a day sooner, when I hope to assure you in person how much I have the honor to be, Madam, your oblidged friend and humble servt.,

ROBT. BURNS.

P.S.—It is now near midnight, but I cannot resist the temptation my vanity, or, with respect to *you*, something perhaps more amiable than Vanity, yet not quite so disinterested as Friendship, puts in my way to make me transcribe the following Ballad for you—it was finished only this day. You know and, with me, pity the amiable but unfortunate Mary Queen of Scots. To you, and your young ladies, I particularly dedicate the following Scots Stanzas :—

QUEEN MARY'S LAMENT[2]

1

Now Nature hangs her mantle green
On every blooming tree ;
And spreads her sheets o' daisies white
Out-o'er the grassy lea :
Now Phebus chears the chrystal streams,
And glads the azure skies ;
But nought can glad the carefu' wight
That fast in durance lies.

2

Now laverocks wake the merry morn, larks
Aloft on dewy wing ;
The Merle in his noontide bower thrush
Makes woodland echoes ring :
The Mavis mild wi' mony a note
Sings drowsy day to rest :
In love and freedom they rejoice
Wi' care nor thrall opprest.

3

Now blooms the lily by the bank,
The primrose down the brae ;
The hawthorn's budding in the glen,
And milk-white is the slae :
The meanest hind in fair Scotland
May rove thir sweets among, these
But I, the Queen of a' Scotland,
Maun lie in prison strong.

4

I was the Queen of bonie France,
Where happy I hae been ;

Fu' lightly rose I on the morn,
As blythe lay down at e'en:
And I'm the Sovereign o' Scotland
And mony a traitor there;
But here I lie in foreign bands
And never-ending care.

5

But as for thee, thou false woman,
My Sister and my fae,
Grim Vengeance yet shall whet a sword
That thro' thy soul shall gae:
The weeping blood in woman's breast
Was never known to thee;
Nor th' balm that draps on wounds of woe
Frae woman's pitying e'e.

6

My Son, my Son, may kinder Stars
Upon thy fortune shine;
And may those pleasures gild thy reign,
That ne'er would blink on mine!
God keep thee frae thy Mother's faes,
Or turn their hearts to thee!
And where thou meet'st thy Mother's friend,
Remember him for me!

7

O soon, to me, may Summer-suns
Nae mair light up the morn:
Nae mair, to me, the Autumn winds
Wave o'er the yellow corn!
And in the narrow house of Death
Let Winter round me rave;
And the next flowers that deck the Spring,
Bloom on my peaceful grave!

P.S.—the 2d.—The foregoing, tho' a shocking scrawl,[3] is wonderfully well; considering that I have both dined and supped with the gentleman who does me the honor to frank this letter.

(1) Nothing is known of this projected journey.

(2) Burns sent copies at later dates to Dr. Moore, Mrs. Graham of Fintry, Clarinda and Lady Winifred Maxwell Constable.

(3) The MS. is excellent, only heavier in line than the poet's ordinary hand.

Ad. Mr. Robt. Burns, at Ellisland,
by Dumfries.

Loudoun Castle, *27th June* 1790.

What a difference between the day before one expects the visit of a friend they regard, and that after which they have bid them a long, perhaps an eternal adieu. How cruelly do I feel this, my friend! How shall I write it? The young, the lovely, the gentle amiable Henri[1] is no more. A fever of three days has laid him in the dust. The God of Mercy look down on and comfort his poor wife! It was never till now I knew how I loved him, or how much he deserved it. Never did a more pure spirit inhabit the breast of man. Never was one more suited for those regions to which he has got so early, so unlooked-for a call. I am in the abode of misery. My eldest daughter has caught the malignant infection. How I feel for his father, and fear for myself in my girls. Poor Susan is some months gone with child. What a dreadful prospect lies before her! O, do write me to Loudoun Castle by Kilmarnock. I can write nobody, not even you. How should I? 'Tis the dead hour of night, and I have just shut a letter to his father. My heart is dead within me at the idea of his reading it. 'Tis for light sorrows women weep. I have not a tear to shed, but I gaunt [yawn] till I am ready to faint, and insensibility benumbs my very hand till it forgets to move. Farewell! May Heaven long spare my friend, but may all your children survive you! Still more, may such shocks as this never make me survive myself! Ah! how different were my feelings when I wrote you of his marriage! Now, attending three sick rooms, I feel bodily fatigue is given by Heaven to relieve the mind. Poor Henri! Thy body is at rest, and thy soul is in eternal bliss.

(1) Her son-in-law, husband of her daughter Susan, and the tenant of Loudoun Castle. The death occurred on 22nd June.

Ad. Mr. Robt. Burns, at Ellisland,
near Dumfries.

Loudoun Castle, *1st July* 1790.

Some body or other says, How vast a memory has love! But O! my friend, how infinite is the forgetfulness of sorrow. I cannot for my life recollect when it was I wrote you last. But what a scene has since passed over me! What has one short week contained—health, happiness, sickness, death, and the grave,

all the rapid succession again suspended over my trembling soul, still sick with unconquerable alarm and unremitting apprehension. Although the dreadful circumstances that produced it seem to abate their horrid force, my mind dare hardly credit its own relief. It will be a fortnight to-morrow since the period of that unfortunate fever which in three days (two of which passed over in unsuspected danger) carried off poor Henri, and then seized my eldest daughter, who never has been able to leave her bed since but for five minutes to witness the body of her beloved brother laid in the coffin. Her afflicted sister, unable to quit hers, lies in a distant apartment of this dismal castle, attended by those physicians whose aid she has seen so lately prove abortive, under whose hand has perished all her hopes. The day before yesterday, Nanny seeming to get a little better, as I accidentally sit by the writing-desk, my heart breathed forth and my hand traced the inclosed lines. This day poor Susan asked me if I ever wrot to Burns. Does this question, asked at such a time, say anything to the feeling heart of the poet? Does my repeating it suggest nothing to the still more exquisite sensibility of friendship? 'Tis but two days since I believed the horses would not be baited till the hearse that came from Ayr to convey the remains of poor Henri to the churchyard of Dunlop must return for another of my family. I got between the sick beds, wandering like a troubled ghost till, worn out with anguish and fatigue, I seek rest in complaining to my God and to the only friend not already overwhelmed with the sight of misery around me. But not even here am I satisfied with myself. Why afflict others because He has seen good to afflict me? Your friends, Mr. and Mrs. Lawrie,[1] have been very very kind indeed. I am grateful, but I cannot shew it as I ought. Farewell! Will you not write me? You are the only one I have asked or almost wished to do it. Direct here by Kilmarnock to your distrest friend.—Farewell.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) The Rev. George Lawrie, minister of Loudon, who had introduced Burns's poems to the notice of Dr. Blacklock.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Loudon Castle, by Kilmarnock.

ELLISLAND, *9th July* 1790.

I have this moment your two melancholy letters. Owing to the carlessness of my servant in not calling at the Post-Office, I had not received your first untill now. What answer shall I write

you, Madam? What consolation shall I, or *can* I, offer to misfortunes so deep and heavy as yours! I am glad however to hear by your last, that Heaven seems inclined to spare you a daughter, though it has with such additional, heart-wringing circumstances deprived you of a son. Poor Mrs. Henri! May that BEING who supports all Nature support her under the very heavy weight of her sorrows; and endow her with extraordinary strength of mind, equal to her extraordinary trials!

> Of Heaven's protection who can be
> So confident, as utter this,
> To-morrow I will spend in bliss!

What hidden trap-doors of disaster, what unseen arrows of misfortune, waylay and beset our paths of life! And Heaven, as if to show its Omnipotence, often from the covert where Suspicion slept as having nothing to fear, looses the Shaft that wounds us to the very soul.

Thomson says finely—

> Attach thee firmly to the virtuous deeds
> And offices of life; to life itself,
> And all its transient joys, sit loose.

And yet, like many other fine sayings, it has, I fear, more of Philosophy than Human-nature in it. Poor David's pathetic cry of grief is much more the language of Man: "O Absalom! My son! My son!" A WORLD TO COME! is the only genuine balm for an agonising heart, torn to pieces in the wrench of parting for ever (to mortal view) with friends, inmates of the bosom and dear to the soul! The most cordial believers in a Future State have ever been the Unfortunate. This of itself; if God is good, which is I think the most intuitive truth in Nature; this very propensity to, and supreme happiness of, depending on a Life beyond Death and the Grave, is a very strong proof of the reality of its existence. Though I have no objection to what the Christian system tells us of another world; yet I own I am partial to those proofs and ideas of it which we have wrought out of our own heads and hearts. The first has the demonstration of an authenticated story, the last has the conviction of an intuitive truth. I have one favorite proof, because (though perhaps five thousand have done the same before me), I have discovered it in its native rock, at least hewn it into shape, myself. There are not any first principles or component parts of the Human-Mind, more truly radical than what is meant by, OUGHT, and, OUGHT NOT; which all Mankind (a most respectable Suffrage!) have, for several thousand years, agreed are

synonimous terms with Virtue, Vice. But, except our Existence *here*, have a reference to an Existence *hereafter*, Virtue and Vice are words without a meaning. If *this scene* of Being is the whole of the *Drama*, then a man's individual self, his own pleasures and enjoyments, are and should be the whole of his care; and the true standard of his actions is, PROPER and IMPROPER. There may be a few that would still be influenced by what are called, Feelings of the heart; but by this new System, these said Feelings are only no better nor more respectable than so many *Constitutional Weaknesses;* and the true MAN of SENSE would be prudent in his Iniquity and wisely wicked. Should any object, the pleasure that would still be in the exercise of Generosity, etc., I answer, that further than such Generosity was useful in promoting your own private purposes, that said pleasure was and ought to be of no higher estimation and value than what is called An ear for Music: a little gratification of the organs of sense, but of no *real* importance in life.

There is sometimes a conjuncture of circumstances which looks like ominous. When I received your letters I was just finishing the following Stanza:—

Envy not the hidden treasure[1]
  Finer Feelings can bestow;
Chords that vibrate sweetest pleasure,
  Thrill the deepest notes of woe.

I immediately and almost extempore added the following, too allusive to poor Mrs. Henri:—

Fairest Flower, behold the lily,
  Blooming in the sunny ray;
Let the blast sweep o'er the valley,
  See it prostrate on the clay.

I have just got a summons to attend with my man-servants armed as well as we can, on Monday at one o'clock in the *morning* to escort Captn. Miller[2] from Dalswinton in to Dumfries to be a Candidate for our Boroughs which chuse their Member that day. The Duke of Queensberry and the Nithsdale Gentlemen who are almost all friends to the Duke's Candidate, the said Captn., are to raise all Nithsdale on the same errand. The Duke of Buccleugh's, Earl of Hopeton's people, in short, the Johnstons, Jardines, and all the Clans of Annandale, are to attend Sir James Johnstone, who is the other Candidate, on the same account. This is no exaggeration. On Thursday last, at chusing the Delegate for the boro' of Lochmaben, the Duke and Captn.

Miller's friends led a strong party, among others, upwards of two hundred Colliers from Sanquhar Coal-works and Miners from Wanlock-head ; but when they appeared over a hill-top within half a mile of Lochmaben they found such a superiour host of Annandale warriors drawn out to dispute the Day, that without striking a stroke, they turned their backs and fled with all the precipitation the horrors of blood and murther could inspire. What will be the event, I know not. I shall go to please my Landlord, and to see the Combustion ; but instead of trusting to the strength of Man, I shall trust to the heels of my horse, which are among the best in Nithsdale. As our Royal Scottish Poet says—

He sud been swift that gat him[3]
Thro' speed that day.

The lad that takes my letter to town, is waiting with impatience. I beg, Madam, most fervently to hear by the first post of your family, and particularly of your own health which I hear must have suffered exceedingly. God send good news from Loudon Castle! ROBT. BURNS.

(1) See *infra*, p. 272.

(2) Captain Miller was returned. According to the *Caledonian Mercury* of 15th July the election took place on the 12th. "The number of people assembled at Dumfries was beyond anything ever seen at that place, but no disturbance happened."

(3) He suld bene swift that gat him
Throw speid
At Christ's Kirk of the Grene that day.
Christ's Kirk of the Grene. Canto 17.

Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.

LOUDOUN CASTLE, 22*nd*[1] *July* 1790.
It is here your letters will still find me. Do write.

Dr. Burns—I cannot give a stronger picture of my own situation at present than is presented in my being under the absolute necessity of postponing writing when you do me the honour to make it your earnest request I should let you hear of me. Don't take umbrage at the phrase, for, spite of the way in which it is in use of being prostituted, I declare upon soul and conscience I regard it as a singular honour and happiness, nay one of those upon which I have ever valued myself most, that *you* think my health or me

worth being interested in or preferring a warm request to be informed about. When worldly advantages forsake and worldly disappointments distress me, when Heaven deprives me of friends I love, and sees fit to wring my heart with the afflictions of those that remain, 'tis to the attachment of a very few and the interiour conviction I feel of the worth and sincerity of those few that my mind is driven to seek its last hold of existence, and there alone it finds something to make that existence sufferable. How comfortable the soothing concern of a friend who can awake us from apathy and discontent, and point us back to our duties in this world, or exalt our ideas to another and a better, or even guide them to the Great Giver of all our good and evil, can teach us still to love and adore Him, and acknowledge wisdom in His terrors as well as benevolence in His tenderest mercy; in every affliction He provides us some consolation, and often sends it in a shape we could never have fancied, nor can the world recognise. Do I not at this moment experience this sacred truth, when my time is passed in witnessing the pangs of disease or the heart-rending sigh of unutterable anguish; when I dare not breathe the sensations that almost smother life or sensibility in my own breast for fear of adding to the misery of those around me; when among all my acquaintances some are too much and some too little concerned in my concerns for me to dare introduce them where they would be overwhelming or obtrusive? Has not Heaven made one whose ways of thinking blend contrarieties as distant from one another as his soul is from his situation, as fate seemed to have placed me from his knowledge or acquaintance—has it not compounded that mind so as mine shall find pleasure in addressing it, given me to discover its worth, and to hail as a friend in the decline of life and amid the bitterest storms of fortune one with whose notice I durst not have flattered myself I should have been distinguished in the meridian of my days? Nor can I still guess on what claim to found my pretentions for that kind, warm interest you are so good as take in me and mine, and in which I feel more comfort than I can possibly express, not only in what you say to me, but in that ease with which I feel myself encouraged to say whatever my mind prompts, and to indulge myself in believing you will read it with the sensibility of a poet and the sympathy of a friend. Yet what have I to return but unavailing gratitude, or that esteem which stupidity alone could withhold for kindness which no self-partiality can lead me to think I merit, and which disappointed efforts have frequently shewed me? I shall never be able to give any proof of my thank-

fulness for but by presenting you now and then with my correspondence. Nay, even that at the moment you are good enough to ask it as a favour I am withheld from complying with by the ten thousand nameless trifles that are required about the sick and afflicted, and a short time hence the total failure of my eyes will preclude altogether what those now interrupt. Nanny's recovery is slower than anything I ever saw, so much so I sometimes rather fear she is getting worse. Yet upon the whole she is stronger. Susan has never yet been able to leave her room, or walk without assistance, and 'twas but two days ago she was so faint and looked so ill that I was called by Lady Wallace from the far end of the house to come quick lest I should not see her alive; and although this was only the alarm of an anxious over-fond old woman, who was at the time really ill herself, you may judge how much it disconcerted me when I found her really so languid I could hardly distinguish whether she was fainting or falling asleep, or actually just dying. However, don't be uneasy about me, for although my mind is at moments quite wore out, my health receives no shock. One past has, I believe, made it impervious to a thousand that might succeed. Yet I was wounded in the most sensible part by an apprehension my son Andrew had been ill alone at home. Thank God! I have been spared that trial, for indeed there I am still quite vulnerable, and the feeling is very self-interested. Without him I fear I could perform no one duty on earth. God forbid I ever be tryed! Poor Henri would be nothing to that; yet Henri was what is seldom found in man.

> O Henri! as it run thy life still tends,
> Thy aim forever was to bless thy friends—
> Those heart-struck friends that crowd around thy bier,
> Transfixt in grief too poignant for a tear.
> Ah! now I see the bitter torrents flow,
> Nature's kind antidote for killing woe;
> Thus once where Mara's bitter waters run,
> God struck the stroak exalts a favour'd son;
> Recoiling Nature sudder'd from the shock,
> And burst the briny sluices of the rock.

Your friend Mr. Lawrie in a sermon has marked the character of this amiable young man in a manner greatly soothing even to his wife, who begged a copy to send to his afflicted father. Alas! what is man when such remembrances may be to-morrow all that remains of him that was dearest to our love? Yet such, drawn by the pen of genius and the heart of a friendship, our affections clasp to with inconceivable ardour, and draw something from them

of talismanic force to sustain the overpowered spirit which reason or even religion itself can hardly support. O my friend! how I sometimes envy those powers you so fully possess. Were they mine I should often be able to pour balm on the wounded heart. As it is, the faint shadow which the superior excellence of some of your works more than anything else has left upon my mind often intervenes between my own heart and its most cutting sorrows, and the attempting to throw a thought into measure wears the sharpness off it when more rational means fail, especially as the rhyme reminds me of and generally is addressed to that friend whose example set the machine at work, and whose singular partiality is perhaps the mainspring which alone keeps it going. Farewell! I have been a hundred times called before I could make out what I have not leisure to read over, but that don't signify. You will read the woman in it, however incoherently exprest, and to you 'tis always the first thought, uncorrected and unrevised, in which I do, I am sure, as I would be done by. Your last made me look the prints, and I wish you joy of your bloodless victory. How differently are we employed! You swallowing the drunken libations of riot, and I dispensing bark and port to the trembling nerves of languid weakness and disease. Yet I envy you not in this. Long may you be pleased and happy, even when I'm otherwise. Farewell!

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Kerr, who franked this letter, appended the following note:—"Mrs. Dunlop writes that this letter had lain in her pocket for some time. I only received it to-day—28th July."

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Loudon Castle.

ELLISLAND, 30*th July* 1790.

Ten minutes ago I had no idea, my dear honored Friend, that your distresses could be of comfort to me, which, odd as it may sound, they have just now been. I had transcribed off for you the inclosed Elegy[1] on a much-valued acquaintance of mine, which I thought might perhaps amuse you a little; and was just set down to write you by this conveyance which is my wife and your little God-son going to Ayrshire to see their friends, when a servant of mine brought me from town, your letter, and one from London acquainting me with the death of a brother[2] of mine who was there a journeyman Saddler. He was just twenty-three, a

fine, worthy, young fellow ; and while my bosom laboured with the anguish consequent on the distressing intelligence—Poor Mrs. Henri ! said I to myself ; and lifted up my heart in gratitude that I was not called to bear such a load of woe as hers.

I am not collected enough to write you a letter. I am happy however that Miss Dunlop is getting better, and particularly that you are not likely to suffer so much as I dreaded in precious health. That was a shocking alarm respecting the Major. It would indeed, Madam, have been a load of sorrows more than you could have borne.

I have just finished the stanzas[3] I mentioned in my last. Allow me, my dear Friend, to dedicate them to you as a Relique at the shrine of friendship—a friendship that makes so large a share of the enjoyment of my existence. If ever I print it, permit me to prefix your name ; and if the period of publication should be at some (I hope very) distant time, when you and I may perhaps be in worlds as different as Heaven and Earth, and should I be the survivor, I shall certainly mention it—

Sacred to the Memory of a much-valued and dearly respected Friend.

Do, let me hear from you ! You cannot imagine what pleasure it will give me ! Adieu ! ROBT. BURNS.

Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop.

(1) Matthew Henderson of Tannochside (Lanarkshire) and Tannoch (Ayrshire), both of which estates he had to dispose of on account of financial embarrassments, ex-lieutenant in the army, ex-civil servant and Government pensioner, a man about town, noted for his "wild sallies." Burns had made his acquaintance in Edinburgh when they both lived in St James's Square. The first copy of the elegy was sent to Robert Cleghorn on 23d July, and it appeared in the *Edinburgh Magazine* for August of this year.

(2) William Burns, the poet's younger brother, died in London on the 24th July 1790.

(3) The two stanzas quoted by Burns in his letter of the 9th July were incorporated in the song "Sensibility how charming," which is No. 329 in the fourth volume of Johnston's *Museum*, 1792. A complete copy was sent to Mrs. Dunlop and on 15th December 1791 Burns wrote to

Clarinda, "I have likewise sent in the verses on *Sensibility* altered to

> Sensibility how charming,
> *Dearest Nancy*, thou canst tell:

to the musical editor of the *Scots Songs*." And so the line appeared in the *Museum*, notwithstanding the promise of dedication to Mrs. Dunlop contained in this letter.

ELEGY ON CAPTN. MATTHEW HENDERSON[1]

Should the Poor be flattered?

SHAKESPEAR.

O Death, thou tyrant fell and bloody!
The meikle devil wi' a woodie, halter
Haurl thee hame to his black smiddie, drag, smithy
O'er hurcheon hides; hedgehog
And like stockfish come o'er his studdie strike, anvil
Wi' thy auld sides!

He's gane! He's gane! He's frae us torn,
The ae best fellow e'er was born!
Thee, Matthew, woods and wilds shall mourn
Wi' a' their birth;
For whunstane MAN to grieve wad scorn,
For poor, plain WORTH.

Ye hills, near neebors of the starns, stars
That proudly cock your cresting cairns;
Ye cliffs, the haunts of sailing yearns eagles
Where Echo slumbers;
Come join, ye Nature's sturdiest bairns,
My wailing numbers.

Mourn, ilka grove the cushat kens; every, wood-pigeon
Ye hazelly shaws, and breerie dens; coppices
Ye burnies, wimplin down your glens brooks, winding
At toddlin leisure,
Or o'er the linns wi' hasty stens leaps
Flinging your treasure.

Mourn, little harebells o'er the lea;
Ye stately foxgloves fair to see;
Ye woodbines hanging bonnilie
In scented bowers;
Ye roses on your thorny tree,
The first of flowers.

At dawn, when every grassy blade
Droops with a diamond at its head ;
At even, when beans their fragrance shed
I' th' rustling gale ;
Ye maukins whiddin' thro' the glade hares, skipping
Come join my wail.

Mourn, ye wee sangsters of the wood ;
Ye grouse that crap the heather-bud ;
Ye curlews skirlin' thro' a clud ; screaming
Ye whistlin' pliver :
And mourn, ye birrin paitrick brood, partridge
He's gane for ever.

Mourn, sooty coots, and speckled teals ;
Ye fisher-herons watching eels ;
Ye deuk and drake, wi' airy wheels
Circling the lakes ;
Ye bitterns, till the quagmire reels,
Rowte for his sake. Roar

Ye houlets frae your ivy bower, owls
In some auld tree, or aulder tower,
What time the moon wi' silent glowr stare
Sets up her horn,
Wail thro' the dreary midnight hour
Till waukrife morn. wakeful

Mourn, clamouring craiks at close of day, corncrakes
'Mang fields o' flowering claver gay ;
And when ye wing your annual way
Frae our cauld shore,
Tell thae far worlds, wha lies in clay,
Whom we deplore.

O rivers, forests, hills and plains !
Oft have ye heard my rustic strains :
But now what else for me remains
But tales of woe ;
And frae my een the drapping rains
Must ever flow !

Mourn, Spring, thou darling of the year ;
Ilk cowslip cup shall kep a tear : Each, catch
Thou, simmer, when each corny spear
Shoots up its head,
Thy gay, green, flowery tresses shear
For him that's dead.

Thou, Autumn, wi' thy yellow hair,
In grief thy sallow mantle tear ;
Thou, Winter, hurling thro' the air
The roaring blast,
Wide o'er the naked world declare
The WORTH we've lost.

Mourn him thou Sun, great source of light ;
Thou, Empress of the silent night :
And you, ye twinkling starnies bright,
My Matthew mourn ;
For thro' your orbs he's taen his flight,
Ne'er to return !

O, Henderson ! the Man ! the Brother !
And art thou gone, and gone for ever ! !
And hast thou crost that unknown river,
Life's dreary bound !
Like thee where shall I find another,
The world around ! ! !

Go to your sculptured tombs, ye Great,
In a' the tinsel trash of state !
But by thy honest turf I'll wait,
Thou Man of worth ;
And weep the ae best fellow's fate
E'er lay in earth !

Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.

LOUDOUN CASTLE, 5*th Augt.* 1790.

If in this humble state to man is given
The first best gifts of bounteous Heaven,
Who forms his organs of her finest clay,
And lights his soul from genius' brightest ray ;
When to the bankrupt such a loan is lent,
The just equivalent is—sure—content.
. . . . . .

My dr. Sir—You beg my writing, and assure me it will give you pleasure. Would to God you may find it so ! I find comfort in the very suggestion, though I dare not call it hope of success. Your sorrow is of too bitter a nature for consolation. Reason talks, but, alas ! Nature feels, and her feelings are uncontroulable. Yet let reason, nay even fancy talk, since, like the wailing of the lapwing, they lure us from a real object.

Let not, my friend, life's transient ills molest :
'Tis trifling suited to the female breast ;
With stronger grasp embrace th' Almighty plan,
And feel with all the dignity of man.

Since my distresses console you, be comforted. I went home yesterday, where I found my son with his arm broke and hung in a sling this ten days ; and his eye still as blue as a Scots bonnet. Yet such is still the state here I could not stay with him more than a night. Poor Susan ! Her fate has a thousand aggravations you know not of. If you come for Mrs. Burns, come here and see

me. Your friend Mr. Dugald Stewart has just brought home his wife to Catrine (my Euphrosine). The happiness of your friends is a more generous source of comfort than my sorrows. Come and rejoice with him. I send you a letter I got this morning from Mr. Corbet. Remember what I said to you of him, and don't lose his goodwill if it can do you any good. Preserve it as a pledge of mine. I shall send your copy of Mylne's Works to Mossgiel. Perhaps I shall not be able to write with it. If so, it will disappoint me more than it can do you, but I am continually employed, and, besides, I had hardly shut my last letter to you when I was taken very ill, and hardly ate an ounce for eight days. Yet I am now quite well again. I had a superstitious terror about Andrew, so that I felt relieved rather than otherwise when I heard or rather when I saw the state his fall had put him in. I now hoped the blow I had feared was struck and past, and I was proud of the manner in which he bore it, for his greatest concern seemed to be the fear of my being made uneasie, to prevent which he found some good reason for writing me a letter every day, though without ever saying a syllable of the accident, which happened just eleven days ago as he was coming here to see us. I think I shall still be here at least a fortnight longer; so do write me, and say if you mean being in this side of the world at this time. I wish I were a member of Parliament that I might save you the 6d. you will pay for this, but I wished you to see Corbet's own words before you see himself, and I could not for a particular reason enclose it to Kerr. I believe while that subsists I should not write so often, as it is really picking your pocket. If I am not wholly annihilated, I will be proud of the posthumous testimony you purpose dedicating to me and friendship. 'Tis a compliment said to the world, but an inexpressible pleasure to me, to believe you have already said to your own heart that you were my friend and believed me yours.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Here and in the preceding letter we have at last confirmation of the common story that Mrs. Burns spent part of the summer of 1790 in Ayrshire, thus permitting her husband to break the good domestic habits which he had set himself to form, and, all unwittingly, supplying the cause, though no excuse, for the *liaison* which the poet contracted this year with Ann Park, of the Globe Inn, Dumfries.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

8th August 1790.

Dear Madam—After a long day's toil, plague and care, I sit down to write to you. Ask me not why I have delayed it so long! It was owing to hurry, indolence and fifty other things; in short, to any thing—but forgetfulness of *la plus aimable de son sexe*. By the bye, you are indebted your best curtsey to me for this last compliment, as I pay it from a sincere conviction of its truth—a quality rather rare in compliments of these grinning, bowing, scraping times.

Well, I hope writing to you will ease a little my troubled soul. Sorely has it been bruised to-day! A *ci-devant* friend of mine and an intimate acquaintance of yours has given my feelings a wound that I perceive will gangrene dangerously ere it cure. He has wounded my pride! . . . . R. B.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Ellisland,
Dumfries. LOUDOUN CASTLE, *18th Augt.* 1790.
[Franked by Kerr.]

Dr. Burns—There is a certain time of our lives when we are reckoned accountable to our parents; afterwards a woman is thought answerable to her husband. I alas! have outlived both these dependencies, and arrived at that period when some think they are wholly their own mistresses, and may just do as it happens, or as they please, without minding how it is received by others. I again think our sex ever dependent and accountable by duty or inclination, not only for our general conduct to the world, but for our thoughts, words, and deeds, to our families, relations, and above all to our friends, to whom it is not sufficient that we are sincere and affectionate, but we ought never, if possible, to leave their mind one moment doubtful of our having that degree of warmth of regard which we really possess and believe important to their happiness. 'Tis for this cause I think it incumbent upon me to account for my being visiting the other day when I was just telling you I could not command as much time as write you along with Mylne's Poems, which you will receive without a line from me, except just some scrawl to know it by on the first leaf, and a few scratches with a pencil at some places which, for some cause or other, I noted more than the rest in running them over, which I did in a very overly [cursory] manner, my mind being always occupyed about something else the whole time. When you heard I went home, you

would think that natural, and forgive me, but when you were told I left the distrest inhabitants here to go and congratulate a new-married pair, one of whom I never saw before, you would be surprised, and at least observe I differed from the text that prefers the house of mourning, nor, I am half afraid, would the observation be wholly free from sarcastic, indignant contempt. Even my telling you the man was Professor Stewart would not seem an apology for such an unnatural desertion of poor Mrs. Henri; nor would even my fondness for his wife be a competent cause for so quickly shifting the scene. But, while I leave the world to animadvert on my seeming giddiness, I will freely tell you I had an errand besides my fondness for the lady,[1] and that second-hand esteem which you perhaps, more than any one else, had inspired me with for the gentleman, which made me haste to Catrine, and I was not disappointed. Mr. Stewart even anticipated all I could have wished, and I flatter myself made my visiting him the greatest compliment I could have paid to poor Susan. As if the shock she had suffered had not been severe enough to add to its bitterness, about a fortnight after his own death happened that of an old grand-uncle of poor Henri's, who, ignorant that he was just gone before, bequeaths him all his fortune, amounting to near £20,000, of which now I'm pretty much persuaded his wife or child can never touch a *louis-d'or;* but of this perhaps your friend may be able to get me better information. Meanwhile, I have not told her a word of the matter. Poor soul! she has enough already on her mind; perhaps, indeed, enough to make all this quite forgotten. Could she be sure of bread for herself and her child in case it ever live to need it, the rest, I believe, would at present appear very insignificant to her. Yet it must have its importance in the eyes of her mother. I wish I could, instead of all this self-interesting business, write something more suited to amuse you, but unless it can please to tell you a comparative compliment payed to merit when contrasted with wealth in that part of the country you once inhabited, I cannot say what should interest you more than myself. I was a stranger; so was my servant; the roads were intricately crost and perplext. We asked the way to Bullockmill; they answered carelessly "Hold up the brae." I then asked the way to Catrine; every one I spoke to run a little way on to shew it, and seemed perfectly in earnest that we should not mistake. I cannot tell you how much this trifle pleased me, but when I arrived I was really delighted. I never saw more modest, gentle, mild manners in a man. I don't believe but I like him better

already than you did your Matthew, spite of all the beautiful flowers you have gathered for his grave, or the variety of birds you invoke to sing his requiem. Though I'm afraid I am but little given to love Heaven better than earth, I like the stanza where the heavenly bodies are introduced better than all the beasts, birds, flowers, or fishes, from which, however, don't, I beg you, infer that I am the writer in the newspaper who thanks you so much for making her study astronomy, for I daresay no man would write such far-fetched insipidity as that admirer of yours who signs a K to her sleepy composition, for which I think you may feel the more grateful, as you will hardly be made very vain. But talking of praise, I ought to tell you Jenny Little says you are very stupid, did not come and see her when you were at Mauchline. She is sure she would not grudge going five times as far to see you. Nay, had she not been lame she would have gone on purpose to Mr. Alexander's, that she might have seen the house you lived in and the reeky spence where you wrote the "Vision." I am almost hoping this will not find you at home, that you will be set out for Ayrshire to carry home your wife and son. Should that be the case, I flatter myself you will not grudge to come a little further, either to see Jenny or me. You may trust to female vanity that each will appropriate a sufficient part of the compliment to herself. Indeed, you have experience how ready I am to catch at every instance of kindness or regard from one whose esteem I value so highly, and whose distinctions, indeed teach me to value myself in a degree which self-love would otherwise, I think, have well-nigh forgotten, and which the general run of insignificant acquaintances one makes at threescore is very ill calculated to make them recall, even if they were in earnest to wish it, which is hardly to be expected they should. Your Elegy on M. H. is a beautiful description of nature, whose minute features are hit off with accuracy, and show the hand of a master. But were they not gathered together by indignation at human indifference for poor plain worth, I should think it was too great a task for disappointed tenderness and indolent, weeping affection to leave the original theme of their sorrow, and go in quest of so large a collection of foreign objects. Yet an old woman of threescore is but an indifferent judge. What are the expressions of fond friendship when a young poet at eight-and-twenty is seated on the turf that covers the last remains of a friend whom he had accompanied through all the jovial scenes that youth, health, wit, and mirth affords, and sympathy of soul inspires. 'Tis a most poetic assemblage, a fine composition; but should you ever form

a garland for me, I would rather bespeak it less luxuriant. A plain sprig of the larix, if you please, would satisfy my ambition, since we are told it can remain unchanged 200 years—no bad emblem for friendship in this soil, where few can reach a tenth of the duration. But let us, my friend, live and die in hope that the plant, when transplanted, will flourish beyond the line of time or of Napier's Logarithms to number its years, though he had wrot his tables on as large paper as I write on to you, tho', indeed, you sometimes emulate me. But what a gainer should I be did we use the same letter-types, since, however ridiculous you may think the alledgence, one line of mine contains more than six of your very best—a matter of fact which, I am sure, you cannot pretend to deny. So, this being granted, you will not find fault that you got some more of them in the cover, for this will not do, as it is those I wrot on being told Catrine was advertised for sale from dislike to the cotton mills. My son's arm is so well he visited us here two days ago. We all begin to get better but poor Mrs. H., who has never yet left her room but for a moment till it was swept. Farewell! May Heaven allow us all to forget our sorrows! Could my best wishes alleviate yours, you know you have them. Write me by return of the post to make up for my disappointment if you are not coming to this country, and tell me if you got mine enclosing a letter I sent you from Corbet. You never sent me back the copy of the Address to Pitt. Remember I expect it, for I never quit anything you once give me. Besides, as you tell me, you seldom have wrot prose, I want to see whether you improve or fall off in future. Farewell! Write me here. I shall still have time to get your letter before I leave this place, if you are not too too indolent. I send this to Kerr.—Your sincere friend,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

MY FAIR EUPHROSINE

Ten years are past since in thy opening face
I traced the features of the youngest Grace;
Since mutual love thy hand has given
To bless a man the favourite of heaven.

. . . . .

(1) Professor Dugald Stewart married in 1790 (*en secondes noces*) Helen d'Arcy Cranstoun, daughter of the Hon. George Cranstoun. She was a poetess; at least one of her songs "The tears I shed must ever fall," is not forgotten.

Ad. Mr. Robert Burns, Elliesland,
Dumfries,

Loudoun Castle, *23rd Sept.* 1790
[Franked by Kerr.]

Does your own distresses make you forget me and mine? If so, indeed our souls have no sympathy, for not a day goes over my head that I do not think of you a thousand times, and envy that genius which would not only put it in my power to soothe the sorrows of my suffering friends, but speak peace to my own mind, rack'd with cares I cannot mend, and know not how to support. Yet even my own insignificant turn for rhyme is not quite useless for the one of those purposes, although too cold and insipid to please or afford consolation where I would wish to apply it to others. I have often drawn advantage from it myself, and when I can do nothing else in life, can frequently read Spanish, or write chimes, for I dare not affront your profession so much as to call it poetry, spite of the innumerable times I have affronted your taste by allowing you to read the compositions which, spite of the clink at the end of the lines, were indeed generally as much the real sentiments, feelings, or imaginations of your friend as if wrot in plain prose. I would fain make an apology for not writing you, were it not a contradiction when I reflect that a quire of paper would hardly contain those I have repeatedly made before, doing it too often, and encroaching on your leisure or wearing out your patience. Indeed, I feel an indulgence in persuading myself that you require an apology, and are either blaming or regretting the uncommon length of time I have kept silence. Perhaps you are doing neither, and will never remember the particularity till reading this make you recollect that I have not plagued you this month. But how long will it be before I forget that on the month of August, just two years ago, I received four letters from you, for which my gratitude is at this moment as warm as ever; so much so that when I look out and see the country overflowed around me, the wind blowing a tempest, and the cut corn swimming down the river, my son John and you rush together upon my mind, the tear swims in my eye, and I am almost sincere in wishing you had never either seen or wrot to me. How proud did I feel once in thinking my advice had had some hand in making you what I earnestly wished you to be—a respectable, happy farmer, with an easie, independent competence, blest with industrious health and cheerful leisure, disposed to bestow many hours upon the Muses, and now and then not grudging to dedicate to me as a friend whom you

recollected with pleasure, or even sometimes with those emotions of gratitude which warm, generous tempers feel for those who sincerely wish their prosperity, altho' wholly unblest with any capacity of improving it. Now I am afraid, when you throw back a disappointed, retrospective glance, you may give me a silent curse, as I am almost ready sometimes to give myself, for at least not holding my tongue. Yet this is a cool prudence I have never hitherto been able to command where I was really interested, nor can I say, if you were still to do me the honour of asking my opinion on any subject material to your future plans, if past experience would teach me sense enough to consider that there was even something infinitely preposterous in my pretending to pass my judgment on any point you had already or were about to investigate; it were like a mole attempting to teach Sir I. Newton astronomy. Well, should the great philosopher afterwards have gone wrong, sure he would never have blamed the poor moodiwart [mole]; so may I not hope you too will overlook your poor blind monitress, who certainly, to the utmost of her power at least, endeavoured to mislead you by strewing every flower she could gather over that path she would herself have wished to tread, and which she believed talents like yours could not only smooth, but make delightful with every embellishment of nature or of art. But how is hope faded away with us both! It was at Morham I then saw her flourish, and it is at Loudoun I now make the cruel, heart-cutting reflection. What a place this for despondency; a standing pool of unmoved water covers the face of the country under my view, and a black cloud above it darkens the sky. Indeed, the scene without is in a great measure the picture of what I feel within, while I contemplate desolation and disappointment overflow and darken all those fair prospects which worth, health, beauty and perpetual good-humour seemed to guard from all dangers, and were guaranteed at least to all appearance as long as I could have any concern in this world by the flattering promise of blooming twenty-three, supported by cheerful contentment and the wholesome exercise and sobriety of a country life. Alas! say you, it is just the same at London. Yes, my friend, I too have felt it so. Your sorrow, though it resembles, does not alleviate mine. My only brother lies in Westminster Abbey since he was seven-and-twenty. This was my first, and many afflictions have followed it; even yours adds another score to the list, and makes me run it all over again with renewed pain. Oft have I wished to write, and oft to hear from you. Something has intercepted my gratification in both, and I

can equally little account for either. Yet, if you saw poor Susan, who indeed sees nobody, and never leaves her room, you would not wonder that her mother's mind should be benumbed into an inactivity like her own. Her unwieldy bulk, her deprest spirits, the uncertainty of her own prospects or those of her child, if it is ordained to survive the horrid presage with which its dawning day is overcast, throw a gloom over me that I cannot break through. I flattered myself for a great while with the hope of seeing you here, as I thought you would possibly come to the country to carry home your wife and child, when I persuaded myself you would have favoured me with a call, and should I have been able to keep you a day, said to myself, "This were so much time stole from misery." But day after day has stole away from my life, and not a word of you, nor do I know if Mrs. Burns is still in Ayrshire, or gone. I dare not now believe I have the least chance of seeing you, or even of hearing from you, as you should not perhaps know where to find me. I therefore must not omit telling you I have not been from this, but one night at home to see Andrew, and next day a call at Catrine in hope Mr. Stewart might have procured me some intelligence of the French law with regard to the birth of Susan's child in a foreign country. But even in this the troubles of that nation have prevented me, while those of India excite alarms for my boys now become strangers in that strange land. I am surprized to find I have wrote over my paper, almost sorry, too, since it is now too big for the short road, and will be so much longer of reaching you; not that I presume to believe that can be material to you, but it delays the point of time to which I can look for an answer, and that is always material to myself.

Jenny Little is just come in to mend the fire, which leads me to say she has wrote some things of late I would have sent you, as they were interesting from the subject to myself. They are, however, too long and too mournful for transcribing at present. She says ten guineas would make her as happy as worldly circumstances could do. Is it not a pity of me that can hear this and not copy the man in the *Guardian* or *Spectator*, who set down the article in his pocket-book "How to make a Man happy £10?" Yet I think were her rhymes properly put out, as the phrase is, she might be made happy and indebted to none but herself, since her modest wishes are placed within such humble bounds, and I dare even say there would be some of the collection not unworthy your reading, perhaps honoured with your applause, tho' you well know I have no reason to call you lavish

of that. Yet I remember you once too did commend some lines of mine a little, I doubt ironically, were it not that your hardly ever acknowledging the receipt of many others might convince me of your unaffected candour as a critic; while I shall evince my unsteadie caprice as one with regard to an Elegy you lately sent me, of which I have wholly changed my opinion, and now think it not only beautifully poetical but pathetically affectionate and tender, and a native picture of indignant sorrow for worth under-rated by the world and unfavoured by fortune. Yet I still admire the end of it most, perhaps because my views of nature are too much from my chamber window, while yours pursue her from her most solitary steps to those grand exhibitions at which men and angels wonder. But to return to poor Jenny. I shall send you a few lines she gave me one day lately on Keith's drawing a blank in the last lottery, but to instruct my ignorance and hers too, I will beg you would just write over a verse or two of it, and return me just as a thing should be done for the press; for I have a curiosity to see what that requires, and as it is not a great deal of trouble, I make no scruple to beg you will indulge it by sending me this little specimen enclosed on a slip of separate paper in the first letter you favour me with. Tell me too how you stand this dismal harvest, and whether you have seen Corbet, also if ever you opened your Address to Mr. Pitt, for it runs in my head some lines of mine were within it, and I shall be sorry any body got them for whom they were not intended. Besides, you were bound in common honesty, not to say discretion, to send me back that Address, or at least a copy of it, unless you have found me less worthy of your confidence than you believed me when you formerly sent it me. But it's time I begun Jenny's address to the young Lady.

> Celia fair beyond description
> Soon became the favourite toast;
> Charms unrival'd, even by fiction,
> Did the lovely maiden boast.
> . . . . .

I have hardly left room to say I shall still be here till Mrs. Henri lie in. To you, who like a faith reason cannot protest against, wish to be a good Christian, and believe with all your heart every thing necessary to soothe the mind and regulate the conduct here, or point to bliss hereafter, shall I mention as a pleasure the works of Samuel Bourn,[1] an English dissenter. He possesses a noble, manly freedom of mind and a great flow of elegant expression. I wish I heard what you thought of his

doctrines. I am sure you must like his clear, bold, unaffected, undoubting and undisguised way of telling his story. Samuel Bourn is at present my best companion; tho' bound in sheep-skin, I hope he is not an wolf in sheep's clothing. Write me whether or not you have got Mylne's book, which I sent to Catrine to be sent you, as they told me they had an opportunity of conveyance which I had not, as I have no servant here and little intercourse with any body. Farewell! I shall be sorry if you are as weary reading this as my eyes sore with a cold feel in writing it.—Believe me, sincerely your friend,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Probably Samuel Bourn (1714-1796) who was educated partly at Glasgow University, and became the colleague of John Taylor of Norwich, whose *Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin* had influenced Burns in his youth.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop, Loudon.
(Per favor of Mr. Lawrie).

ELLISLAND, *6th Oct.* 1790.

Dear Madam—Your last letter[1] came to me exceedingly opportune indeed. I was just beginning to get the better of a malignant squinancy and slow fever which had tormented me for three weeks and had actually brought me to the brink of the grave. I inclose you Mr. Corbet's letter. I have not seen him, but from the gentleman's known character for steady worth, there is every reason to depend on his promised friendship.

I am glad to hear by my friend Mr. Archd. Lawrie that your good family are getting rather better in health and spirits. Health! the greatest enjoyment on earth, and wanting which, all other enjoyments are of poor avail. This sentiment I have lately felt in all its force.

I give you joy of the works of Mr. Bourne, which you tell me you are reading. I once had the first Volume, and was so delighted with it that I could have almost repeated it verbatim. We can no more live without Religion, than we can live without air; but give me the Religion of Sentiment and Reason. You know John Hildebroad's famous epitaph—

Here lies poor old John Hildebroad;
Have mercy on his soul, Lord, God,
As he would do, were he Lord God,
And thou wert poor John Hildebroad.

This speaks more to my heart, and has more of the genuine spirit of Religion in it, than is to be found in whole waggon-loads of Divinity. I have not a moment more left. Adieu!

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) Kerr did not despatch it from Edinburgh till the 28th.

While in the midst of the composition of the following letter Mrs. Dunlop received a copy of a portion of "Tam o' Shanter." Whence it came, and whether it was MS. or print, it is impossible to tell. There is no printed copy known earlier in date than that in the *Edinburgh Magazine* of March 1791, and it is difficult to imagine who could have sent Mrs. Dunlop a fragmentary MS., unless indeed it were Ainslie, and he does not seem to have been particularly intimate with her. Burns, as will be seen, afterwards sent Mrs. Dunlop a full copy of the poem, which is preserved in the collection now in Mr. Adam's hands, and she took dire offence at some passage or other not contained in the fragment she saw at first, probably the lines beginning—

Now Tam, O Tam, had thae been queans.

The MS. has the following preface:—"Aloway-kirk, the scene of the following poem, is an old ruin in Ayrshire, hard by the road from Ayr to Maybole, on the banks of the river Doon, and very near the old bridge of that name. A drawing of this old ruin, accompanied perhaps with "Tam o' Shanter," will make its appearance in Grose's Antiquities of Scotland."

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.

LOUDOUN CASTLE, *Novr.* 1790.

My dr. Sr.—Were you a woman and truly by character a female, I might tell and make you enter into the thousand indescribable circumstances which have of late employed me, and which some French author says on another occasion it is impossible to analyse while one feels them. Perhaps, too, if I could, you would think it little worth while, and lest that should be the case, I will not make the attempt. You may remember I once advised you to drink yourself out of a fever. I am told you have lately reversed that plan, and along with your friend Nicol got into one, which, however, I was glad to hear from Mr.

A. Lawrie[1] was not incurable, since it did not prevent your traversing the farm with him, and being at Dumfries, to all appearance hale and hearty—an account which I truly rejoiced in, more especially when he added that you had this season the finest crop the land had carried this twenty years. I was more pleased with this than with your rencounter with the Schoolmaster,[2] who, the world says, has already damned you as an author, and now well-nigh killed you as a man. As to the first, I believe it impossible; as to the other, Heaven forfend it, at least in my time, during which I pray you may be preserved that I may have as long as I live one friend to whom I can write without a moment's reflection about what! Yet I feel sometimes mortified in reflecting that it seems all one to you whether I do it every day or not. For six weeks you never call me to account, never accuse me of unkindness or neglect, never require an apology for my silence, nor pen one supernumerary line to ask from what it proceeds. Shall I own, my friend, this superlative good-breeding has sometimes given me pain, and created a momentary suspicion, that you rather endured as wished my correspondence. At times this idea has froze the ink which at others flowed so freely from my pen. But now and then yours drops a paragraph really calculated to thaw it again, and make me ashamed of having harboured a thought injurious to you and degrading to your friend. No, since you have once given me this name, I will believe myself of it, conscious as I am of feeling that interest and esteem which gives the truest claim, and as I hope you are something of the opinion of Monsieur Dorat in the following French couplet, that will give me a stronger title still to your goodwill—

Plus mon ami peut m'être utile,
Moins j'ai de plaisir à l'aimer.

Is not this an extravagant enough thought, even for a poet? Yet I half suspect it is not wholly foreign to the soul and feelings of him to whom I write, and this very suspicion makes me glory much the more in flattering myself he receives my letters with pleasure, and sometimes wishes for them before they appear, notwithstanding the frequency of that event and the insignificance of all they contain. After all, you are really a strange creature, and I don't know sometimes what to make of you. There are occasions when the only way I can solve the riddle is by believing what I have often alledged, that you don't read what I write, or that you have been set with Mr. Nicol at the time and forgot next morning; else you would now and then certainly do some of the

little trifles I request of you, if not to please me, at least to show yourself not wanting in polite attentions to the ladies. *Par exemple*, you would have been at the trouble of writing over four lines as they ought to be for the press; 2ndly, you would have returned me your Premier's letter; 3rd, told me if you had got Mylne's book, etc. etc. etc. Now, the less a thing signifies in itself, the more I should have been flattered to see you bestow upon me a degree of remembrance too minute to find place in favours of a mere general acquaintance. But why should I say so, who feel every day that in the familiar ease of writing we often quit our subject to say some perfect nothing, as I have done till I shall not have room to tell you that I am the means of making you the admiration of distant nations. I spent a fortnight lately with a Portuguese educate in France, who in that time learnt to read and idolize your writings. He said he never liked poetry before, and was now convinced there was a spirit in it unknown to those nations; that he would speak of you as the greatest wonder he had ever met in visiting the East and West Indies, France, America; and would repeat your verses instead of his prayers to soothe his soul or thrill the blood in his veins in a way he had never believed in the power of verse till he read your *Cotter's Saturday Night*. He said he wondered if it was the superiour force of your genius or the comparative weakness of other European languages that made the difference of effect he experienced, and by the bye I have just the self-same doubt, for poor Henri was not fond of poetry, and I never saw one to appearance more made to relish its charms, had he been in use of meeting them in his native tongue, so that I really begin to suspect there is no such thing as a pathetic, touching poem in French; or if ever I have met one, I certainly have not understood it. I have been of late witnessing scenes such as a youthful poet would have almost been laughed at as wholly visionary had he presumed to feign—I mean the most fervent enthusiasm of friendship personified in the foreigner I have just been mentioning. He was a much loved and dearly loving friend of poor Henri, who, breaking through a thousand inconveniences, left London and came to Scotland to visit the tomb of his friend, and weep over his widow for a fortnight. On this occasion I presented him the lines below as an alleviation to his disappointment in missing half his errand by finding not a stone to point the place he looked for.

Wrot on a French gentleman's coming to Scotland to visit the grave of his Swiss friend buried there among the descendants of Sir William Wallace—

When Edward's fury bore our wealth away,
And robb'd our Chieftain's corse of covering clay,
Our ruin'd land no monument could raise,
In heart-wrung blood she stampt her hero's praise.
Six centuries past th' impression still has run,
Her genuine seal still marks her darling son.
. . . . . .

Here last night my candle dropt into the socket, and obliged me to go to bed in the dark. I waked this morning to read a piece which no hand but [one] could have produced. Let me rejoice with you, my friend, that the torch of Hymen has not extinguished the little stars of imagination which shine in all the sparkling brightness of a clear frosty evening in the tale now before me.

Kings may be blest, but thou art glorious,
O'er all the ills of life victorious;
As bees fly home laden with treasure,
By thee the moment's winged with pleasure.
But pleasure will not always last;
They're like the rainbow in the blast:
Awhile it shows its lovely form,
Then vanishes amid the storm.
The wind blew as 't'would blawn its last;
The rattling showers rose on the blast,
Each in its cauld hand held a light,

To shew a sight no other conjurer on earth could have called into being

A murderer's banes, in gibbet-airns;
Twa span-lang, wee, unchristen'd bairns,
A thief new-cutted frae a rape,
Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape.
The grey-hairs yet stack to the heft:

These, with the heart and tongue that follow, with imagery beyond praise or comparison — never presses on earth shewed such groups as this little tale develops on the road and in the kirk, as well as at home and at the market. Dear Burns, by what heroic spell can I be able to lay another line e'er on your table? I have almost lost courage to send you an old ballad I had transcribed on purpose. But why have you defrauded me of a sheet where I find a thousand beauties besides those mark'd, which are inimitable? I don't think I will write you again until I can tell you of Susan. Pray, was what you said of Corbet burlesque or serious? You should put a mark, as modern authors do to their printed works, to distinguish praise and satire, and not trust too much to the cold brains and thick skulls of your

readers, especially when they are wholly ignorant, as I am, on this subject. As it was, however, possible you might been earnest, I wrote him[1] again inquiring if he had seen you, and reminding him how much it was in his power to oblige me. My fire is gone out, and my fingers froze; so that, though I had more paper to do it on, I should not be able to do more than tell you I am still here, and will be long enough to hear from you, if you are not very unkind indeed, which I have no right to accuse you of till you shew yourself guilty. I am sure nobody values your letters so much as, dr. sr., yours,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Archibald Lawrie, son of the minister of Loudon, and successor to his father in the charge. He had seen something of Burns in Edinburgh in 1787, and had kept up the acquaintance. There is record of a visit he paid to the poet at Dumfries in 1793. See the new *Chambers*, vol. iv. pages 13, 14.

(2) William Nicol, the Edinburgh High School Master, Burns's companion on his northern tour, and the "Willie" of "Willie brew'd a Peck o' Maut." It was in 1790 that Nicol bought a small estate in the parish of Glencairn, four or five miles from Ellisland, and no doubt he took possession in the autumn, and entertained his friend as hospitably as he had done at Moffat in the previous year, when the immortal song was produced.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Ellisland,
Dumfries.

LOUDOUN CASTLE, 16*th Novbr.* 1790.
[Franked by Kerr.]

My dr. Sr.—It is always with pleasure I avail myself of writing to you; with double pleasure that I assure myself that my joy shall be your joy when I tell you Mrs. Henri has just brought us a fine boy.[1] Not your own wight start and heir, with a voice like his great name-father, can promise better than our little Otway, for he is already a favourite of the Muses, laid in the lap of Jenny Little, and there addressed by your friend as follows:—

Thou gentle babe, whose lovely face
Smiles thro' cold winter's storm,
While foreign nations anxious wish
To hear if thou art born;

Impatient fame flies o'er the seas
Thy natal hour to tell:
May peace and joy forever rest
Where thou art doom'd to dwell.

The same day brought us intelligence of the general peace,[2] and private pleasure by letters from India, saying James was well, and Anthony appointed to a ship now in China. As I was up all night on Sunday, and close with Mrs. Henri, who was severely ill on Monday till six at night, I shall add no more but that she has had a good night's rest, and seems to do well. So I shall once in my life have wrot you a letter you will not think too long, and begging you may give me a longer one in return, remain, Dr. Burns, your much obliged humble svt.,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) 15th November 1790. Birth, at Loudoun Castle, Mrs. Henry, widow of James Henry, Esq., of Bernadean, of a son.—*Scots Magazine.*

(2) The danger of an outbreak of hostilities between France and Great Britain passed away for the time at this period, and a junction of Prussia and Austria promised to bring the struggle between Russia and Turkey to a close.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, *November* 1790.

"As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." Fate, or Providence, or whatever is the true Appellation for the Power who presides over and directs the affairs of this our world has long owed me a letter of good news from you, in return for the many tidings of sorrow and woe which I have received from you. In this instance I most cordially obey the apostle—"Rejoice with them that do rejoice." For to me to *sing* for joy is no new thing; but to *preach* for joy, as I have done in the commencement of this Epistle, is a pitch of extravagant rapture to which I never rose before.

I read your letter—I literally *jumped for joy*—how could such a mercurial creature as a Poet lumpishly keep his seat on the receipt of the best news from his best Friend? I seized my gilt-headed Wangee[1] rod, an instrument indispensably necessary, in my left hand, in the moment of Inspiration and rapture—and stride—stride—quick and quicker—out skipt I among the broomy banks of Nith to muse over my joy by retail. To keep

within the bounds of Prose was impossible. Mrs. Little's is a more elegant, but not a more sincere, Compliment to the sweet little fellow than I, extempore almost, poured out to him in the following verses :—

ON THE BIRTH OF A POSTHUMOUS CHILD, BORN IN PECULIAR CIRCUMSTANCES OF FAMILY-DISTRESS.[2]

Sweet flow'ret, pledge o' meikle love (much)
And ward o' mony a prayer,
What heart o' stane wad thou na move,
Sae helpless, sweet and fair !

November hirples o'er the lea, (limps)
Chill on thy lovely form ;
And gane, alas ! the shelt'ring tree
Should shield thee frae the storm !

May He, who gives the rain to pour
And wings the blast to blaw,
Protect thee from the driving show'r,
The bitter frost and snaw !

May He, the friend of woe and want,
Who heals life's various stounds, (pangs)
Protect and guard the mother plant
And heal her cruel wounds !

But late she flourish'd, rooted fast,
Fair on the summer morn,
Now feebly bends she in the blast—
Unshelter'd and forlorn.

Blest be thy bloom, thou lovely gem,
Unscath'd by ruffian hand !
And from thee many a parent-stem
Arise to deck our Land !

I am much flattered by your approbation of my "Tam o' Shanter," which you express in your former letter ; tho', by the bye, you load me in that said letter with accusations heavy and many, to all which I plead, *Not guilty !* Your book [3] is, I hear, on the road to reach me. As to the printing of Poetry : when you prepare it for the Press you have only to spell it right and place the capital letters properly ; as to the punctuation, the Printers do that themselves.

I have a copy of "Tam o' Shanter" ready to send you by the first opportunity : it is too heavy to send by Post.

I heard of Mr. Corbet lately. He, in consequence of your recommendation, is most zealous to serve me. Please favor me

soon with an account of your good folks ; if Mrs. Henri is recovering, and the young gentleman doing well.—I am ever, my dear Friend and honored Patroness, Yours sincerely,

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) A trade name for a slender yellow cane imported from Japan.

(2) First published in the *Scots Magazine* for December 1793.

(3) Mrs. Dunlop was about to print for private circulation a few sketches of her own, in prose and verse.

Burns now sent Mrs. Dunlop a complete copy of *Tam o' Shanter*, of which she had hitherto seen only a fragment. Its reception must have surprised him ; in all probability it highly offended him. Mrs. Dunlop in her answer of the 31st not only returned to the charge of indelicacy, on grounds suggested above (p. 286), but reverted to her remonstrance on the subject of his total abandonment of farming. In characteristic fashion she rubbed in the irritant, laying down her pen one day only to resume it on the same topic on the next, yet at the same time obviously attempting to atone for or distract attention from her offensive criticism by abnormal verbosity on other subjects. Burns did not condescend to defend himself ; he kept silence for some six or seven weeks. When he did write on the 7th of February he explained his silence by a fall with his horse. But that accident, whatever its date, did not prevent him from writing to Dunbar on 17th January, to Hill on the same date, and to Cunningham on the 23rd—all three letters in a tone not inconsistent with the special aggravation which Mrs. Dunlop's attack might have produced, and which hers of the 28th shows that she feared it had produced.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Loudoun Castle.

ELLISLAND, *6th Dec.* 1790.

Madam—After tasking you with the perusal of so long a Poem, it would be Egyptian bondage to burthen you with an additional long letter.

I wrote you two or three days ago, which I hope has come to

hand. I hope you take care that the sweet little Floweret is properly sheltered in this nipping Decemberly weather; for though Mrs. Little and I have planted a Parnassian bower round him, yet I fear the laurel will prove a very defenceless shade; at least, it has ever turned out a thin shelter for its Owners, and poorly qualified to fence off,

Poverty's cold wind and crushing rain!

I am half angry with you that you have not let me know ere now, how poor Mrs. Henri recovers. There is something so interesting in her situation that I cannot get her out of my head, morning, noon, or night. The first tragedy I ever saw performed was *Douglas;* and Mrs. Henri eternally puts me in mind of the horrors I felt for Lady Randolph's distresses. God forbid the sequel should be similar!

There is a fine copy of Blind Harry's history of Wallace printed at Perth, from a Manuscript of great antiquity in the Advocates' Library; with an Engraving of him from a genuine picture in the possession of the Society of Antiquarians.

If I thought you had not seen it, I would send it you. It is the most elegant piece of work that ever came from any Printing-press in Great Britain.

There is likewise just published, Barbour's *Life of Robert Bruce*, done from an old Manuscript in the Advocates' Library. If I could get it safely sent, you might have it.—Adieu.

ROBT. BURNS.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.

LOUDOUN CASTLE, 31*st Dec.* 1790.

The situation in which I sit down to write is one rather uncommon in my line of life—by candle light, at six o'clock in a cold morning of Decbr. This from a lady, from one of those whom education and the custom of a pretty long life has taught never to behold the rising sun, ought to be a compliment in some degree worthy of a poet. Indeed, I owe my friend some more than common testimony of gratitude for the goodness he has showed in remembering me, spite of my apparent negligence. May I hope my dedicating this early hour to tell you so will prove incontestably that I have wishes to snatch the first moments I could command to converse with and thank you for your letter, your poem, and your gilded card—all which I have had the pleasure, and let me add the pride, of receiving since I wrot you last.

For, believe me, I boast to my own heart when I consider that I have not only been able to draw you into a correspondence, but that, instead of appearing fatigued with the tedious punctuality of answering my letters, you have given me two for one, and for once exprest something like being half impatient to hear from me again; for, although you place all this to your humanity for the distress and anxiety about the helpless and forlorn, I indulge myself in believing the intelligence either of the little flow'ret or the storm-beat mother plant would come far less welcome from any hand but my own. You see it is not difficult to flatter one so ready to meet it half way, and construe everything to her own advantage. It is often said we are ever ready to believe what we wish. I doubt the truth of this assertion, for I feel so sensibly the value I set upon acquiring a place in your partial esteem that I cannot for my life sometimes believe it possible I should at present really possess it, spite of all the pains I am conscious I have employed to that purpose, and which good nature and politeness could hardly help acknowledging. To be sure, in no one instance I had ever made so great an effort to set the best foot foremost as when I commenced rhymer in order to fix your attention, and divert my own from those painful feelings that then corroded my mind. Don't, however, believe it is for the same reason I am now become early riser and have outstripped the activity of the light to write you; instead of which I only got up to make breakfast for my son and daughter who had past the night here, and were obliged to go home very early in the morning, when, instead of returning to bed after they set out, I took up the pen, though, as I daresay you are already convinced, without any plan what to do with it. Else I could never have trifled till now without telling you that I have got another son at Morhame, the nineteenth born of or from me, besides nine daughters. Won't these afford one day ample field for the asses which Jenny Little has placed upon Parnassus? But apropos to her, she has wrote on your last little sweet subject too. I would send you her lines were it not for the trouble of copying them, and that you say you mind nobody's but your own. Indeed, where yours appear, other people's are generally forgot; so *in this* you are only like the rest of the world—a circumstance perhaps not to be parallelled by you in any thing else, for I doubt if either India produces a greater exotic in most other respects, of which my correspondence, insignificant as it is, does not fail to furnish a proof, since without something very extraordinary it had never existed. Yet believe not I mean alwise to compliment you; far

from it. My praises never go one iota beyond that point to which my idea of real or fancied merit reaches. You tell me you are obliged by my applause of a late production of yours. I had seen then only one half of it, and I applaud the editor, whoever he was, for I don't know his name. Yet he shows me the truth of an old axiom that "Fools should not see half done works," at least that they should not speak of them. Had I seen the whole of that performance, all its beauties could not have extorted one word of mine in its praise, notwithstanding you were the author. You know how hard it is upon a woman to hold her tongue. Why, then, my good friend, do you ever reduce me to so cruel a necessity? To be sure, you did not mean to send it me till I asked it, but 'tis not your showing me a thing, but your inclining to write it, that I think of, since I wish to contemplate characters exactly as they are, not just as they may chuse to appear in my company, especially when they are endowed with those qualities I am most disposed to love and esteem. 'Tis then I feel for their dignity, and every blot that seems black to another's eye makes mine water, yet does not blind me so far as not to see the beauty of the simple and natural image of "snow falling in the river,"

A moment white, then gone for ever.

But I am interrupted, and I daresay you don't regret it. I must bid adieu to you till to-morrow, and to the Year '90 for ever.

1st Janry. '91.

Let me begin by wishing you all the new joys of the New Year. May you be blest in friends and fortune, and, above all, preserve all you have of both, especially the first; for, alas! the acquisition of a thousand could not—at least I am sure I feel it so—compensate for the loss of one truly dear, though a new one at my time of life is valuable, if it were but for novelty. Yet, would Heaven prolong the loan of the few I have, I don't thirst for any more, nor am so unreasonable as to expect them. Now that my own heart is become as cold as December, I wish it may not freeze my little Flow'ret's, which are so early sung by Jenny and you. I wish it may not be too soon prizing green bear,[1] as the saying is, but meanwhile "the beams of bright wit, warm from Helicon, glow, and with beauteous flowerets embellish our snow." Indeed, the lovely little creature is more charming in reality than all the powers of fancy can create, or else the decorations of tender distress make an irresistible impression on my mind. But, what

is more material than beauty, he seems blest with a degree of health and strength I durst never have looked for in the circumstances in which he was ushered into being. His mother has never yet quit her room. Lord knows when she will. Yet I think she recruits in strength, but, alas! not in spirits to support her tragic fate. Why do you never mention your little boy now? I hope he is well, and beg leave to enclose a New-Year's gift from his godmother, just to prove that, though you are silent about him, she can never forget the honour done her in his baptism. Poor little thing! I am sorry to think he will not grow up in that rural simplicity in which he was born as a farmer's son; but we are taught to believe what is is best. Yet never have I had more difficulty to persuade myself of this than in some of the incidents of your life. I hope you are wiser than me, and don't look ever back discontented to anything you cannot help. Let me hear from you as soon as you can, if you don't think me impudent in the request, considering how ill I have of late seemed to deserve such indulgence. But I have only promised to be here till the 12th or 14th of this month, and do not well know where to bid you direct later, and should like to know if this comes safe to hand. But why need I urge a particular reason for wishing you to write soon, since there is no time your letters can come when they do not afford me one of the most elevated pleasures of my present superannuated days, which, spite of both age and fate, however, I do not feel unhappy—a change to which few things have contributed more than your pen and that goodness to me which encouraged me to get rid of many a dismal hour in writing you when I would have wrote no one else, and when my own thoughts were no balm for an wounded mind? It was then I found it in the unspeakable variety of yours; even your levities amused, serious pieces comforted, and tender ones soothed me. But tell me, my friend, why has genius so often a desire for childish levities? Why does these impurities fall even from a Shenstone or a Littleton, and corrupt others. Might not an Exciseman glory in emulating the chaste pen of Thomson? Nay, ought he not to fear that what the world would pass in a Lord might be imputed to the low ribaldry to which his profession must frequently expose him? Envy is sharp-sighted, and ready at every catch to lay hold of those circumstances that enable her to pull down towering merit, which gives her the spleen by its successful superiority. You would rejoice with me in seeing the figure our friend the Dr.'s family[2] make in the newspapers, where one of his sons is marked for a Lieutenant-Colonel, the other as Master and Commander in

the Navy, which he entered at the same time with Lord Gurliss [Garlies], who, besides being heir-apparent to a rich Earldom, had two uncles Admirals, and one at the head of the Privy Council, and whose claims is supported by the first interest in England. What pleasure must that father feel who is enabled, purely by the force of his own abilities, to push on his children equal with the foremost in birth, wealth, and interest, while he beholds them unequalled in real merit and agreeable qualities, proud of his talents, and grateful for his affection, in which indeed he excels all I ever knew. To this his children owe an education suited to the prince or the peasant, in which their minds and bodies were alike remembered, their constitutions mended by his medical skill, their morals attended to, and every idea imprest that could improve benevolence, friendship, or humanity, encourage industry, prudence and economy, repress arrogance, petulance, barbarity, or insolence, and blend the goodness of a Christian with the spirit and freeborn independence of a man, fit to work out his own way in a world with which he is early and properly made acquainted, so as to serve others without being a dupe himself; to feel himself so truly well instructed and ready knowing as to be always beloved, modest, and unassuming. Nor did the Dr. even stop here. The ornamental acquirements were added, exteriour as well as interiour, with a profusion which no other man in similar circumstances could have reached. But to this end every effort of his soul tended; for this he practised physick, wrot books, calmed an ungovernable spirit of his own, and studied the face of nature and the mind of man, to turn every thing to their advantage. Behold in him a noble instance what assiduity and perseverance can perform. He was the son of a poor Scots clergyman, unaided by everything except the tenderest love and most reverential esteem of the best wife ever a man choise for the mother of that family which was to constitute such a part of his future pride, consequence and happiness in this world, and, I believe, inspire his fondest hopes and wishes for another; for his regard is too strong not to be immortal, and his mind too comprehensive not to be pious. The varieties in his character gave him innumerable advantages for instructing youth, and he employed them all carefully, and has been gloriously rewarded in the fruits of his labour. John Moore was a little of a poet, too, though in this far far inferiour to my friend. May I not perhaps one day look down from Heaven, and see how far you have gained ground upon him in the race of life, and been enabled to hand on my little godson up the same steps to worth, fame and fortune, tho',

poor little thing! he and his three little companions in infancy here and at Morhame must begin the farce playing at the foot of the stair of Dame Fortune's temple? 'Tis hard to say but some of them may climb the pinnacle even before your eyes are shut up from the prospect. Why may we not believe there lies as many degrees of latitude to the side of prosperity as compose that immeasurable tract we sometimes feel markt by almost instantaneous adversity? Alas! my poor little Henri! Sixteen days robbed you of rank, friends and fortune, before you saw the light. God alone knows what the turn of the scale may bring. Meanwhile, you have got a good nurse and good health—the most important favours Providence could at present send, and to those let us leave thee for a time.

Do you know what has of late employed me and, I believe, helpt to prevent my pestering you with so many letters as I used sometimes to do? I have wrought a year to get a man into a small employment for bread to a small family. At last I happened to succeed, and he has got himself turned out in a week. I am now endeavouring to get one fixt in Bedlam, where I have no interest, and know not where to begin; but the work is very necessary, and I shall do my utmost to struggle through it. Another thing has taken me a little up too has been getting French letters, which I am at a loss to understand. I know you have made a study of that language. Pray do help me a little if you can guess at the sense of the following paragraph, which I shall copy as exactly as I can for your translation:—

"Si mes bonnes étoiles me permettent d'aller en Ecosse, je serai charmé de faire la connaissance de Mr. Burns, afin de lui exprimer mon admiration pour ses excellents ouvrages, que j'ai prêté à quelques connaissances, et il n'y en a pas une qui ne partage mon enthousiasme pour un génius aussi simple dans ses vers, que sublime dans ses idées." I hope part of the employment of the '91 shall be studying the numbers of that author who once honoured me with a New-Year's Ode, and I would fain think may now be writing me, as you once told me you habitually remembered your friends with the return of the season, and set apart naturally particular days of the year, when the ideas of friendship or devotion recurred with redoubled energy, such as New-Year's-day, the first Sunday of May, etc., when you had singular pleasure in dedicating time to the sacred haunts of your youth and the attachments of your early years. When the mind's eyes run over Ayrshire, I indulge a pleasing expectation of coming in for a part share of that favourite recollection. Perhaps you do

me the justice to think I would relish the contemplation, and feel a communication of it a new sanctification of the holiday, which would make me look forward to its return with more soothing, contemplative, musing melancholy, should another return of it be allotted me, or look back with silent resignation to those past eras which, in robbing me of much, had nevertheless left me their debtor for the acquaintance whose sweet numbers, kind letters and friendly attentions must forever imprint them in my grateful memory. I have got the copy you were so good as offer me of *Wallace*, and I believe I have likeways one of the eldest black Saxon copies of *Bruce*. Otherwise I should have catched at your offer. Meanwhile, I feel just as much obliged by your making it as if I had accepted. But perhaps you had means to enhance the value by some lines along with the book. If so, these are still my right, and I cannot part with one jot or one tittle of it, but must beg your still letting me have them to give value to my own book, in which I confess I have not skill to find all the advertised perfections. Would Providence but cover your fields as close with grass and corn as I have covered my paper, I should rejoice over it with a pleasure which I doubt this poor crop can hardly afford you. I remember I had once a cousin grow old and dotard; he could never recognise his wife's picture when it was put into a new frame. I am frequently afraid, amid repeated removals and transmigrations, I should at last no longer be able to distinguish the sweet native rose of Mossgiel should it cease to bloom in Ellisland. If so, I'm sure I shall preserve a thorn to rankle like the foot of Philoctetes. Adieu! this letter is either worth three or good for nothing. I hope you will allow the first, and so think yourself in my debt, and write me immediately, so that I may get yours before I leave this. Perhaps I may be some few days beyond the 12th, tho' I think it will not be long. I have not left room almost for a name, but it is needless. I suppose nobody else writes you as much nonsense at one time as, Dr. Burns, your sincere friend and obedient humble Sert.,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Estimating a crop before it is ripe.

(2) John Moore this year succeeded to the colonelcy of the 51st regiment. His younger brother Graham (afterwards Sir Graham, Admiral, who did distinguished service in the French wars), was promoted on 22nd November, 1790, to be commander of the *Bonetta* sloop. It was he who introduced Burns's Poems to the notice of Dr. Currie.

To BURNS.

[1] Mrs. Dunlop's best compts. to Mr. Burns. Unexpectedly employed about the unlooked-for distress of an unfortunate friend, she forgot to let him know she is still at Loudoun Castle, where she will be glad to hear from him, and to know whether a letter she wrot on New Year's Day, containing good wishes for him and his family, and the compliments of the season, more particularly to her little godson, ever reached Ellisland. She has likewise the pleasure of telling him the little blossom still blooms as fresh and beautiful as ever, and the mother has at last got into the hall; so that she hopes soon to get home, yet wishes first to have an answer to the above question. She begs the thousand nameless attentions required about the truly unhappy may be an apology for her silence, if it is not too much presumption to suppose it needs any. Yet should vanity mislead her so far, the poet must remember his former goodness has laid some foundation for it, and gratitude ought not to be construed into folly. Miss Dunlop is still very far from well. This, added to the care of her daughter's house and child, and any assistance she can afford her afflicted friends at Edinburgh, must for a while employ all Mrs. Dunlop's spare time and spirits, and deprive her of the pleasure of repeating to Mr. Burns with what esteem she always is his obliged and obedient, humble servt. Please address still here, and write first post.

28th Jany. 1791.

(1) Written on a scrap of paper. The date is on the docket only.

ELLISLAND, *7th February* 1791.

When I tell you, Madam, that by a fall, not from my horse but with my horse, I have been a cripple some time, and that this is the first day my arm and hand have been able to serve me in writing; you will allow that it is too good an apology for my seemingly ungrateful silence. I am now getting better and am able to rhyme a little, which implies some tolerable ease, as I cannot think that the most poetic genius is able to compose on the rack.

I do not remember if ever I mentioned to you my having an idea of composing an elegy on the late Miss Burnet [1] of Monboddo. I had the honor of being pretty well acquainted with her and have seldom felt so much at the loss of an acquaintance as when I heard that so amiable and accomplished a piece of God's works

was no more. I have as yet gone no farther than the following fragment, of which please let me have your opinion. You know that elegy is a subject so much exhausted that any new idea on the business is not to be expected: 'tis well if we can place an old idea in a new light. How far I have succeeded as to this last you will judge from what follows.

ELEGY

On the late Miss Burnet of Monboddo.

Life ne'er exulted in so rich a prize
As Burnet, lovely from her native skies;
Nor envious Death so triumph'd in a blow
As that which laid th' accomplish'd Burnet low.

Thy form and mind, sweet maid, can I forget?
In richest ore the brightest jewel set!
In thee high Heaven above was truest shown,
As by His noblest work the Godhead best is known.

In vain ye flaunt in summer's pride, ye groves!
Thou crystal streamlet with thy flowery shore,
Ye woodland choir that chaunt your idle loves,
Ye cease to charm: Eliza is no more.

Ye heathy wastes immix'd with reedy fens,
Ye mossy streams with sedge and rushes stor'd;
Ye rugged cliffs o'erhanging dreary glens,
To you I fly: ye with my soul accord.

Princes whose cumbrous pride was all their worth,
Shall venal lays their pompous exit hail,
And thou, sweet Excellence,! forsake our earth,
And not a Muse with honest grief bewail?

We saw thee shine in youth and beauty's pride,
And Virtue's light, that beams beyond the spheres;
But, like the sun eclips'd at morning tide,
Thou left us darkling in a world of tears.

The parent's heart that nestled fond in thee,
That heart now sunk, a prey to grief and care!
So deckt the woodbine sweet yon aged tree,
So, rudely ravish'd, left it bleak and bare.

I have proceeded no further.

Your kind letter, with your kind *remembrance* of your godson, came safe. The last, Madam, is scarcely what my pride can

bear. As to the little fellow, he is, partiality apart, the finest boy I have of a long time seen. He is now seventeen months old, has the smallpox and measles over, has cut several teeth and yet never had a grain of doctor's drugs in his bowels.

I am truly happy to hear that the "little floweret" is blooming so fresh and fair, and that the "mother-plant" is rather recovering her drooping head. Soon and well may her "cruel wounds" be healed! I have written thus far with a good deal of difficulty. When I get a little abler you shall hear further from, Madam, Yours, R. B.

(1) Elizabeth Burnet, daughter of Lord Monboddo, whose acquaintance Burns made in Edinburgh in the winter of 1786. She died on 17th June 1790, and as the poet told Cunningham, to whom on the 23rd January of this year he sent the first copy, he had been hammering at the elegy for several months. The Elegy was published by Currie in 1800.

Burns allowed a couple of months to elapse before he wrote again. The presumption that he felt her reception of *Tam o' Shanter* so much as at least not to be as kindly disposed to Mrs. Dunlop as usual is supported by the fact that this was not one of his inactive periods. On the contrary, he was unusually fertile of both letters and verse. He wrote at this time the "Lament for Mary Queen of Scots," "There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame," the "Lament for James, Earl of Glencairn," etc., and corresponded with Mrs. Graham, Dr. Moore, Lady Elizabeth Cunningham, Alexander Cunningham, Mr. (afterwards Principal) Baird (about Michael Bruce's poems), and others. His second disabling fall, which he assigned as a reason for his silence, did not occur till the end of March.

Ad. Mr. Robt. Burns, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.

Loudoun Castle, 13*th Febry.* 1791.

I had last night yours, and though I shall ever be most sincerely interested in whatever concerns, pains, or pleases you, yet I have of late been witness or sharer in so many distresses of my friends where the heart was the part affected, that a broken bone or lacerated fibres, even when belonging to a son or a friend, hardly claim my attention. Don't think this unkind, for had I heard of your disaster from any one else I'm sure I should have felt

very much alarmed and anxious about you. But when reported by your own hand, I just thought, as you say about the rhyming, that nobody would write me upon the rack; and so please myself in the thorough trust that the danger is past, and even the pain become supportable. I am only vext to think your horse's feet may have suffered either in fact or reputation, as the one may be a future mean of injuring you in purse, and the other in person —either of which would be disagreeable and inconvenient to you, and consequently regretted by me. Indeed, I must regret this very accident too, since you tell me it has deprived me of some letters which your little cousin only told me you had not time to write. You ask my opinion of the Elegy on Miss Burnet. I find one great fault with it, which is that it begins at the wrong end, so that it makes the ideas descend from Heaven down amongst the sedges; but if you would consent to begin at "In vain," etc. etc., and reading on to the end, place after it the eight first lines beginning "Life ne'er," and ending with the word "known," I think that would render it an exceedingly pretty thing, and substitute the climax for what to me seems to savour of the bathos in its present form. I like the notion of leaving the chearful summer grove and flowery banks of the crystal stream, with their idle love songsters, to go mourn Eliza in the marshy moss or over-hanging cliffs of the dreary glens; but some ladies to whom I read the next verse say 'tis too imitative of Shenstone's cumbrous pride and pompous exit of princes. I have not his poems to look over, nor do I enough recollect them to give an opinion of the justice of this critic. The reflection itself seems to me naturally enough to flow from the theme without being prompted by any foreign remembrance whatever. The picture of youth, beauty and immortal virtues beaming beyond the spheres, till, eclipsed at morning tide, it leaves us darkling in a world of woes, is a tender preparative for the introduction of the father under the affecting image of the old stump stript of its sweet woodbine's comfortable shade, and the subject, warming to a degree of enthusiasm, introduces the sublimer measure and devotional rapture of the first stanza—I think with more propriety than at the first outset of the piece, besides giving the whole a more finished air than it had before. But all these notions may be quite foolish; yet since they are mine, I freely submit them to your better judgment, and will be proud of myself should it sanction mine. If not, I shall honestly believe that I am wrong in what I have ventured to advance, even should you give no one reason in support of the contrary, but that, after once more

reading it over, your taste still approves the original construction; for, all compliment apart, the plain downright truth is that I have a much higher esteem for your taste than my own, although I am perfectly conscious I prefer my own to many a one whom the rest of the world deem wonderfully superiour perhaps to both you and I. I think of leaving this at last on Thursday next, if nothing unlooked-for prevent me, after which address for Dunlop. I have been very little troublesome with my letters this great while. The sorrows of others has imployed me, and if I have been perhaps less useless than formerly, I ought not to feel less happy. Yet I have been deprived of pleasures for which I have a strong relish. I have not been able to indulge myself in writing almost the only letters to which no duty calls me, but to which the hope of drawing answers makes me ever sit down with eagerness, and often to the neglect of others, for which I cannot properly account to myself, and far less to others; for 'tis an established maxim of mine that where we could be of material service to our fellow-creature, even were it an enemy (but I hope I am not so unfortunate as to have one myself), it would be criminal to waste the favourable moment in pleasing ourselves, trifling with a friend to whom we can be of little avail. Heaven and my good friend forgive the many deviations I have made from this rule in behalf of the Ayrshire Bard, to whom I have often employed my pen when ten thousand reasons called for my doing it elsewhere. Yet he was so good as say my writing him frequently made him happier than he should otherwise have felt himself, and this one reason, supported by the pleasure it gave and the pride it inspired, overcame all the rest, and set me a-scribbling as if I had been paid by the sheet, or, like the blind fiddlers, to make me hold my tongue. But, before I do so, I must wish you joy of the one or two children I hear are just a-coming, and tell you I have had a visit of your brother, and shall think the better of Mr. Alexander for the rest of my life. I wish you would write me a character of your father and mother, that I may be able to guess what entitled them to the superiority their sons possess, or if it is only the accidental sport of nature—surprizing enough, it must be confessed, if it took place to such a degree in three instances in one family, which Mr. Burns told me, with the most persuasive appearance of integrity, the young man you lately lost could have been no exception from.—Adieu, Dr Sir, your sincerely obliged and obedient humble sert.,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

X

Ad. Mr. Robt. Burns, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.

Loudoun Castle, *26th March* 1791.

Dr. Burns—After the time which has elapsed since I received yours I am sure you cannot imagine—indeed I dare say will not believe—how much I have wished to hear from you again, or how anxiously I have interrogated the post every day whether he was certain he had no letters for me, or how disappointed I felt when his answer was always the reiterated No. Yet I hoped every day to-morrow would make me amends. To-morrow and to-morrow came and went, and left me as they found me, vext, uneasie, or angry; for I am enough a woman to have been each by turns, nor do I coolly think any of these feelings wholly unreasonable. My friend tells me of illness, of writing with difficulty the first day he had held the pen, and adds that as soon as it became easier I should hear from him again. Should I believe him still ill, should I suppose he had forgot his word kindly and voluntarily pledged, or should I entertain a surmise that his inclination to write me required the spur of a promise to put it in motion? Pride forbid! for this would be the most painfully humiliating tenet of my creed, and if it is the case now, I would insist on your never putting yourself to one moment's disagreeable trouble on my account, since, spite of all the pleasure and self-complacency I feel in receiving your letters, and the long and unwearied pains I have been at to procure your correspondence, its value would instantly fall 100 per cent in my estimation the moment I became convinced you bestowed it with reluctance. To one so versant in Nature I need not tell how much it adds to the worth of every real or imaginary qualification of the head or heart to see it the property of one who possesses at the same time that peculiar faculty of the mind most suited to discover and properly, or rather partially, appreciate our merits, and receive with most grateful relish every mark of our kindness or esteem. Remove this darling distinction, and a Dryden or a Goldsmith might be as much to me as a Burns. I should half forget the qualities of the Bard who enchanted Joy Hare to such a degree as to exclaim on reading his works he made him pleased he was a man, glad he was a Scotsman; but when he recollected they were wrot by an Ayrshire man, that brought home matters and made him proud of his country and himself for belonging to it too. But I did not sit down to praise the poet, but to write the friend, by whom I beg to be remembered and relieved from a kind of anxiety really become painful from its continued length. Tell me

you are perfectly well again, and I don't know but I might almost say those few words will give me as much pleasure as any or all you have ever wrot. But stop, I already retract, for should you be perfectly well, and have been so for any time, how should I satisfy myself as to the reasons of your long silence, unless you say, as others tell me for you, that you are busy preparing for the press the Tragedy of Sir John Wallace? Indeed, for a great while I honestly believed you busy, but it was in gathering in the publick rents—in plain prose calculations of cubic inches of wort, stands, or vulgar fractions of farthings, instead of buskined verse and immortal heroism, love and beauty—all which I suppose must have place in the modern drama. Though I am still here, where I have been held by an unaccountable fate much longer than was proper, I cannot tell how much longer it may last. Do, however, write me, if but a single line. Perhaps it may still find me here, though I cannot answer even for that. My uncertainty hitherto has kept me silent, but I have not patience to remain longer. So Mrs. Henri is talking of inoculating her son. She has now got pretty well, and has been twice or thrice in the fields of late. Alas! if Hygeia smiles, Fortune frowns most cruelly on her, and I know not how to leave her. Do let me beg a line, and if ever you would oblige me, grant the request. My best wishes attend Mrs. Burns, who I hear is about to bring you another son. Adieu! Say you are well and happy; 'twill make me so.

Ad. Mr. Robt. Burns, Ellisland, Dumfries.

(30*th March* 1791.)
[Franked by Kerr.]

Dr. Burns—Jenny little is just returned from visiting her friends, and has brought me the disagreeable intelligence that you had had a third fall from your horse, and broke your arm.[1] This is very bad. Yet I would be glad to hear it were no worse. She tells me you could not lie down in bed, but was obliged to sit all night in your chair, and in very violent pain. Dare I believe in this case that the fracture is the only bad effects of the fall, and that you have not at same time received some contusion that may be of still more vexatious consequences? As it is the right arm, I cannot expect or even wish to receive a line from your own hand for a long long time; but allow me to beg the favour of your desiring somebody about you to write me how you are, and what is the doctor's report at dressing the arm again, if he thinks the accident such as you have the probability of

getting soon quit of, and whether the pain becomes so much easier as to admit your getting down your head, or at least to allow your resting quietly in your chair. Meanwhile, though I greatly applaud that strength of mind which enables one to surmount bodily pain to such a manly pitch of fortitude as to chat at seeming ease and tranquillity, as Jenny tells me you did, and entertain others with great kindness and good humour, yet I hope you will not push even this effort too far, and by talking too freely, or putting about the glass too briskly in gratitude to those friends who, I make no doubt, sympathy and goodwill may on such an occasion gather round you, the fever naturally attendant on broken bones acquire an additional force that may be very dangerous in its operation on one particularly hardly recovered from two previous disasters of a similar kind so lately happened and so troublesome. I must likewise insist on your promise, if providence is so kind as put it in your power again to hold the reins of a bridle, it shall not be in the head of the same unlucky animal that has already cost you so much. It is a poor bravado of courage for a man to break his neck, and an unjustice to a family to risk the father's life and their bread, to save the price of a horse, although perhaps he was too dear a one, and he may be sorry to sell him at a wan-worth [for an old song]. Yet remember, my good friend, what Scripture says on another occasion—"what doth a man profit if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" What doth a man profit if he can gain twenty or even five and twenty guineas on the beast that costs him his office, his limbs, and his life? Think of all this, and dismiss Pegasus, if not for my sake, for that of Mrs. Burns and the children, who, they tell me, are the finest little creatures in the world, especially my little godson. But of this I suppose you are fully enough sensible already. But don't be too vain of them, for they will be spoilt in the town where I understand you are going in future to live, and made little impudent, pert things, with pampered constitutions, instead of the health, innocence, and bashful simplicity they would have retained at the farm—a line of life I always was partial to, but which I doubly esteem since I knew you and have been in company with your brother. But let me say no more on this head, since it is only praising the dead, and you have already, I fear, paid too dear for adhering to my ideas instead of your own. I trust if you can keep clear of temptation your own plan shall succeed better than mine. I rejoice as much as at present I can rejoice at the favourable turn of your Excise prospects, as Jenny fells me you are now a Supervisor.[2] I hope this is no poetical

fancy of hers but plain prose truth. I believe that is £150 per annum. Some of our ladies say they would break both their arms and one of their legs for as much. I own I am not so wise or so stout, not even for my friends, for the joy of your promotion in no measure compensates to me for the misfortune that accompanies it, and I would rather you had remained a subaltern a year longer with whole bones as been made an East Indian Supervisor at the price they set, since in the same ratio it must have amounted to being brock upon the wheel. I wrot you yesterday morning by the west post when I had not the least surmise even in fancy of your situation. Forgive what I then said in favours of that full confidence in your goodness to me that leads me to hope hearing from me even in your present uneasie state may give you some satisfaction. I have therefore set up when every one else is in bed to scribble something, no matter what. If it can for a moment suspend the sense of pain and the tedium of confinement, I shall think I have been better employed than even in sleep, though I frequently alledge that is the sweetest enjoyment of my life and the most valuable part of my existence. Don't laugh, for it would be worth my while to live, at least to breathe, for the sake of my family, although I were never to awaken, and this very consideration has often a good effect in reconciling me to this world in the very moment of its most heartrending crosses and vexations. Is not this being very philosophical? Yet I am not asleep to the female spirit of curiosity. Indeed, I profess always feeling it in what concerns my few friends, if the interest I take in their happiness can be called by so degrading a name. But call it what you will, only satisfy it by informing me if you are really a Supervisor, and where and by whose means I will in return send you some lines I wrot the other day inviting a young beautiful woman I was very fond of to come here and see me. I don't say who it really was, but the name led it to be believed a daughter of Mr. Lawrie's, a very good but not a very handsome girl. I shall also, if time serve, transcribe you the last thing Jenny Little composed, as I hope it may afford you some amusement. It is addrest to a poor half-witted creature that lives at the coal-pit here, and mentions a poor old man who was in Portugal with John, Earl of Loudoun, and is pensioned by the little countess.

POEM ON CONTENT INSCRIBED TO MY GOOD FRIEND JANNET NICOLE BY JANNOT LITTLE

O Jennet, by your kind permission,
My Muse in tatter'd low condition
Would fain attempt, if you'll allow,
To dedicate a Song to you.

. . . . . .

Jennet, farewell, you've lint and tow,
O keep your toke well frae the low : head-dress. flame
While turmoils torture Land and Sea
Content may smoke a pipe with thee.

LOUDOUN CASTLE, *Monday*.

My hand is so crampt I can hardly say farewell, but must beg to hear from you. Indeed, I shall be quite uneasy till you cause some one assure me the danger is past, and your arm promises to serve its master as before.—Adieu, Dr. Sir, your obliged and obedient humble sert., FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Jenny Little was waiting at Ellisland to see Burns when he came home with his arm broken. She described the scene in verse.

(2) Burns had for some time entertained hopes of rapid promotion. In the August of the preceding year Nicol had believed that he was already an examiner. As a matter of fact he was, on 27th January 1791, merely placed on the "Register of Persons put on the list for examiners and supervisors," and it seems he had by this time concluded the arrangement by which he was to get a foot-walk at Dumfries, giving up his farm.

Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.

LOUDOUN CASTLE, *6th April* 1791.

My dr. Sir—Spite of your not letting me hear, I endeavour not to believe you continue so ill, or are prevented by a fever from being able to acquiesce with my request of desiring some one of the servants in the house or any body else that chance threw in the way to let me hear of your health and prospect of recovery. I will not say what pains your not doing this gives me ; only I am sure, could you guess at it, you would regret your silence, and be instant to relieve the anxiety I should have felt for any degree

of suffering or danger of the Bard, even before you had honoured me with the kind attentions I have for years past received with so much pleasure and gratitude from one whose genius without any other advantage would have ensured my admiration, and whose talents and goodness of heart required not the aid of harmonic numbers or varied imagination to command my esteem. To be able to hold a place in yours has and ever will be one of the most earnest wishes of my heart, and to know you are as well and happy as this world can make you one of my sincerest pleasures, as at this moment the dread of your being otherwise is truly distressing, and hangs about me spite of all my efforts to the contrary. The direfull accident must undoubtedly confine you for some time, and the accounts I got of it was melancholy and alarming. Yet I always persuaded myself hitherto that I should have a line telling me you were easier, and had escaped any apparent threatenings of worse consequences than the fracture itself. Now I am no longer able to lull my apprehensions to rest; on the contrary they keep me awake, and when I sleep I dream of the Major and you fencing with the poor broken stumps, and the ends of the bones coming through the flesh and piercing out both your eyes. I waked with a scream, and my own eyes not quite dry on the occasion. It was, it must be confessed, a most horrible sight, and might have drawn both cries and tears although the combatants had been far more indifferent than either a son or a friend. How happy should I have been when I awoke and behold! it was a dream; but alas! what a dismal vision did waking fancy present as what might very possibly be the real present situation of one of the parties, and perhaps the cause of my not being favoured with the line I had begged and so earnestly wished to get. Sure you don't regard me as so much your friend as I really am, or you would not leave me to fancy you very ill, your wife alarmed, in a state unfit to stand a fright, and perhaps your tenderest affections hurt with a still more cruel wound than the fall had been able to inflict. Fate has of late persecuted some of those I love so much that I have learnt to fear for all. There is even a possibility you may not have got the large packet I sent a few days ago with a view to amuse your convalescent hours, as I hear my friend Willie Kerr is far from well; he may have neglected to send my letter. This idea pleases, and for once in my life I am able to draw a pleasurable sensation from the knowledge of the indisposition of one of the worthiest and best of men, and, what to me, I confess, is still more, one of the few people on earth that I do believe thinks almost as well of me

as all the world that know any thing of the matter agrees to do of himself. I send this the other road, and will make you pay for it, since you don't chuse write. Adress still here, where I am to remain on account of the proposed inoculation of the sweet little flow'ret, whose name is James, and who increases in grace and stature and in favour, I hope, with God and man. Heaven grant success to this critical operation, on which the mother's heart, life, and future peace seems to hang. Poor thing! She is wonderfully pluckt up within this few days. I tremble lest it should prove a blink before a storm. The squally blasts have beat too bitterly on her already. Would to God the winter of her days may be past. Though some body or other says life knows no return of the spring, yet I think this is sometimes a mistake. I ought even myself to acknowledge with gratitude that I have felt it so. How very different is my health and spirits from what they were that year you published your works to Scotland and to me. Had they not, how should I have lived amid the scenes to which I have been last season witness, and where I was the sole person to lend that comfort and support I had so lately stood so much in need of? I have sure been indowed with strength beyond my own. Would it were also allowed me to cast a gleam of joy round the couch of your distress, and I would esteem myself the more for it all the days of my after existence. Yet after all it would be but paying my debt—a debt I doubt I must for ever lie under, unless you will be satisfied with reading the inspirations of the sincerest regard and goodwill instead of those of the Muses. Were your ear as bad as mine, the voice of friendship would afford it sweeter sounds than the music of Gluck, or de Kain (?), Johnie Riddle or M'Laughlan.[1] Providence kindly makes time, age and years an opiate that lulls the memory of past sorrows. But alas! how dim a curtain they draw between and present joys. Your hand has struck perhaps the last notes I may ever strongly relish. Habitual gratitude, should the powers of memory be extinguished, will make me from former custom bless the name of Burns, I think, while I live, and I flatter myself you have hit on at last one kind method to make you all your life warmly interested in that of Francis Wallace. When you have read this, give a kiss to my little godson, and desire some one instantly to tell me how his father and mother is, if you believe I have any reason but some silly vanity in the correspondence of a poet for writing. Were this the case, it might be despicable or punishable by others, not by you, to whose self-love it ought still to be a sort of compliment. Fare-

well. May I receive the news I wish from Ellisland, and be able to make a suitable return from this. But, good or bad, I beg you may no longer withhold them. To know the worst is so far a melancholy comfort, as to tell it is always a mark of kind remembrance, and remembrance never pleases us more than when we have reason to believe most part of the world for a time forgotten. Adieu. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

This day Mrs. Henri inoculates her child, and emburys her all on one bottom. God be a Father to the fatherless and the widow's comfort and support in this arduous trial!

(1) John Riddell of Glengarnock, Ayrshire (1718-95), composer of reels and strathspeys; he wrote the air for Burns's "Fate gave the word, the arrow sped" in Johnson's *Museum*, and was dubbed by the poet in his note thereon "that bard-born genius." M'Laughlan is probably John M'Laughlan (*circa* 1740-91), composer and writer about music.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 11*th April* 1791.

I am once more able, my honoured friend, to return you, with my own hand, thanks for the many instances of your friendship, and particularly for your kind anxiety in this last disaster that my evil genius had in store for me. However, life is chequered —joy and sorrow—for on Saturday morning last Mrs. Burns made me the present of a fine boy,[1] rather stouter, but not so handsome as your godson was at his time of life. Indeed, I look on your little namesake to be my *chef d'œuvre* in that species of manufacture, as I look on *Tam o' Shanter* to be my standard performance in the poetical line. 'Tis true, both the one and the other discover a spice of roguish waggery that might perhaps be as well spared; but then they also show, in my opinion, a force of genius and a finishing polish that I despair of ever excelling. Mrs. Burns is getting stout again, and laid as lustily about her to-day at breakfast as a reaper from the corn-ridge. That is the peculiar privilege and blessing of our hale, sprightly damsels that are bred among the *hay and heather*. We cannot hope for that highly-polished mind, that charming delicacy of soul, which is found among the female world in the more elevated stations of life, and which is certainly by far the most bewitching charm in the famous cestus of Venus. It is indeed such an inestimable treasure, that where it can be had in its native

heavenly purity, unstained by someone or other of the many shades of affectation and unalloyed by some one or other of the many species of caprice, I declare to Heaven I should think it cheaply purchased at the expense of every other earthly good! But as this angelic creature is, I am afraid, extremely rare in any station and rank of life, and totally denied to such an humble one as mine, we meaner mortals must put up with the next rank of female excellence—as fine a figure and face we can produce as any rank of life whatever; rustic, native grace; unaffected modesty and unsullied purity; nature's mother-wit and the rudiments of taste; a simplicity of soul, unsuspicious of, because unacquainted with, the crooked ways of a selfish, interested, disingenuous world; and the dearest charm of all the rest, a yielding sweetness of disposition and a generous warmth of heart, grateful for love on our part and ardently glowing with a more than equal return: these, with a healthy frame, a sound, vigorous constitution, which your higher ranks can scarcely ever hope to enjoy, are the charms of lovely woman in my humble walk of life.

This is the greatest effort my broken arm has yet made. Do let me hear, by first post, how *cher petit Monsieur* comes on with his small-pox. May Almighty goodness preserve and restore him! R. B.

P.S.—In a letter I had lately from Dr. Moore, he bids me to remember him to you and to beg of you not to think that his friendship flags when his pen lies still. He says, except on business, he now seldom lifts a pen at all. But this is from myself: the devil take such apathy of Friendship!!! R. B.

(1) William Nicol, born 9th April 1791.

Ad. Mr. Robert Burns, Ellisland, Dumfries.

Loudon Castle, 30*th April* 1791.
[Franked by Kerr.]

Dr. Sir—I should have had still more pleasure in receiving your last, had it not been preceded by one from your brother, who forestalled all your good news. Uneasie at having no return to two letters I had wrot to enquire about your broken arm and your surmised promotion, both of which truly interested me, and afraid you had grown worse, I took the liberty of applying to him for that information you did not favour me with, never considering that—

When a poet's bones are broke in twain,
The airy substance soon unites again,

as I am now happy to understand it has done in the present case, tho' you left me too long ruminating on a situation to which my fancy did not give so agreeable a termination. I have endeavoured to take my revenge, but I doubt you are beyond my power. Your wishes to hear of *le cher Monsieur* will not be so irksome as mine were, if for no other reason but that a woman's curiosity is always more intense on every subject than a man's, and a man perhaps a more important subject than a man-child, which last you have now indeed likewise thrown into the bargain, as well as Mrs. Burns's breakfast, which did me almost as much good as if I had eat it myself; and I sincerely congratulate her and you, not only on the increase of your family, but still more on the charming picture you draw so many years after wedlock of the rural fair. Indeed, I believed all my life that those who were in what you call the humble walk had their lines in the most pleasant places. Not that I agree with you in believing either caprice or affectation can only perch on the topmost branches of the tree of life. On the contrary, I have seen them frequently build on the very ground, and there rear a numerous offspring, almost as luxuriant as were to be found any where else. But while I cannot permit you to appropriate those harpies who destroy female perfection allenerly [only] to the superiour goddesses, I fear the ladies must also resign the most bewitching charm of the cestus of Venus. The real refinement and delicacy of a woman's mind is certainly independent of all education, and, like a genius for poetry, fire from Heaven falling on the embryo on its first existence. In short, the said cestus may just as well be wove on the herd's loom of Shetland wool as formed of the materials of an Indian shawl, and tinged in Tyrian Royal purple. The true value is the warmth of kindness, the whiteness of innocence and softness of peace and simplicity, which every effort of improvement tends to spoil. Sterne's illustration of the smooth shillings applies fully to our sex; for if any little asperities are rubbed off by art, every one is taking from the original value of the silver, only to give a shine it is not a bit the better for, while the loss is undisputable. Now, are you not accusing me of affectation in imitating your faults, since I cannot attain your singularities of another denomination? I have neglected your kind request of writing as you did mine. I am writing and not telling you a word of what you asked, just as you did to me, and

if you are angry at this, it will be imitating me as much as is consistent with your sex, who are always angry when we are only vext and uneasie, and alarmed for the safety and welfare of those friends who perhaps had only forgot as for a little. Your brother's answer was brought me sitting at table. It contained every information, and answered every word of mine. For the first time of my life I toasted a Nabob. I involuntarily lifted my glass and drank} Mr. Alexander, whose opinions had acquired a new value in my estimation from the three or four lines I had just read, for which I beg you may return my thanks. Tell me, too, if you can—or if ever you mean to tell me any thing I ask—why I am not better pleased with this card than with a letter ending with a line which I must quote for sake of the author, as you once said, "The devil take all such apathy of friendship?" *Nota bene.* This is sacriledge against friendship and the sin against the Holy Ghost in my sight, since it is applied to the steadiest friend and the worthiest, most warm-hearted man with whom I was ever acquainted, by whose acquaintance I have gained more advantages in the improvement of my morals, the pleasures of my mind, and the interests of my family than from any other connection I ever was able to form in the course of near fourty years that I have been happy in believing I held a place in his good will some thing equivalent to the esteem I must always feel for him. Though I regret his not writing, I cannot resent it, nor am entitled to complain of what I have so much deserved from all the world except one, whom I have perhaps sometimes rather persecuted too much with an insipid correspondence, to which good-nature has led him to submit till I have learnt to consider his letters as a due to which I have an unextinguishable right. But I must, before I end, tell you the little floweret has been twice inoculated; in consequence has had three small-pox, cut one tooth, and got well again. His mother once more stout and well, and able to look after her household; so that I shall leave her in two days or three to go home, where any letter you may write will, I think, now find me, as I hope this will do you in health yourself, and all around you; though in the meantime I, who, for ten months wandering from sick room to sick room, have seemed to glean up the health every one had lost, have now got as much rheumatism as has kept me in bad humour all yesterday and in bed all this forenoon; or perhaps you had not got off with the single sheet, tho' I am now quite well and brought into temper by the hopes of seeing my son John and his wife when I go home, and some far less agree-

able intelligence from France, India, and England, upon which I must chew the cud as quietly as I can, comforting myself that I have not the second sight. And perhaps Providence means to bless me in the very circumstances which at present twitch me as sharply as the rheumatism. Thank God! I have not seen my son James's name in the list of news-paper killed or wounded,[1] or read any bad fate attending the Mermaid from Canton in China. My health is restored, and the Bard willing to exert the first strength of his arm to promote my happiness. I feel all these blessings and am truly grateful. Farewell. Dr. Burns, write! Your letters always, whatever you omit, still delight and oblige FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

What did you think of Jenny Little on sight? She was much pleased with your polite attention and kind offer.

(1) Probably the first brush (14th September 1790) in the campaign against Tippoo Sultaun, in which Colonel Floyd lost 436 killed and wounded. As Abercromby was not yet engaged, Mrs. Dunlop's fears for her son were quite groundless (see page 343). The *Mermaid* was Anthony's ship.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, *May* 1791.[1]

Many thanks to you, Madam, for your good news respecting the little floweret and the mother-plant. I hope my poetic prayers have been heard and will be answered up to the warmest sincerity of their fullest extent; and then Mrs. Henri will find her little darling the representative of his late parent, in every thing but his abridged existence.

I have just finished the following song which, to a lady the descendant of Wallace and many heroes of his truly illustrious line, and herself the mother of several soldiers, needs neither preface nor apology.

Scene—A Field of Battle. *Time of the day*—Evening. The wounded and dying of the victorious army are supposed to join in the following:

SONG OF DEATH[2]

AIR—*Oran an Aoig*

Farewell, thou fair day, thou green earth and ye skies,
Now gay with the broad-setting sun!
Farewell, loves and friendships, ye dear, tender ties!
Our race of existence is run.

Thou grim king of terrors, thou life's gloomy foe,
Go, frighten the coward and slave!
Go, teach them to tremble, fell tyrant! but know
No terrors hast thou to the Brave!

Thou strik'st the dull peasant, he sinks in the dark,
Nor saves e'en the wreck of a name;
Thou strik'st the young hero, a glorious mark!
He falls in the blaze of his fame.
In the field of proud Honor, our swords in our hands,
Our king and our country to save,
While victory shines on life's last ebbing sands,
O! who would not die with the Brave!

The circumstance that gave rise to the foregoing verses was—looking over with a musical friend M'Donald's collection of Highland airs, I was struck with one, an Isle of Skye tune, entitled "Oran an Aoig," or "The Song of Death," to the measure of which I have adapted my stanzas. I have of late composed two or three other little pieces which, ere yon full-orbed moon, whose broad impudent face now stares at old Mother Earth all night, shall have shrunk into a modest crescent, just peeping forth at dewy dawn, I shall find an hour to transcribe for you. *A Dieu je vous commende!* R. B.

(1) Currie dated this letter "Ellisland, 17th December 1791," which was an obvious mistake, as Burns had by that time left Ellisland for Dumfries. Subsequent editors, however, in correcting him, also fell into error; Chambers dated the letter from Dumfries. Internal evidence and the context here supplied prove that it was written at Ellisland, but in May, not December, of 1791, thus confirming the tradition that "The Song of Death" was one of Burns's last poetical efforts before leaving his farm. Note Mrs. Dunlop's favourable report on Mrs. and Master Henri in her letter of the 30th April, Burns's above allusion to the news, and Mrs. Dunlop's mention of "The Song of Death" on 3rd May.

(2) No. 385 in the fourth volume of Johnson's *Museum*.

Ad. Mr. Robt. Burns, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.

Dunlop, 30*th May* 1791.

My dr. Sir—I have been at home three weeks, the first of which I spent in bed from a severe cold and a visit of my frequent guest, the rose in my face. Since I have got better I

have had a much more welcome visit from my son John and his wife, who with their third boy are still with us. The night I wrote you last I was somehow overwhelmed with something unaccountable, like the presentiment of evil, which dwelt on my spirits spite of every effort I could make to the contrary. I believed it suggested by the thoughts of parting from my daughter, and her little one, perhaps for ever, as she had positively said she durst not come to bid adieu to her paternal abode, and I was dubious about the propriety of returning to sharpen the parting pang by another separation for her from a mother who could ill set her a right example of that fortitude her unfortunate situation requires, and whose mind and constitution were both exhausted by the past eleven months' endeavour to keep up those about her. Next day brought me the accounts of the death of one of the first, and alas! one of the last of my early friends, one with whom I begun to be very intimately acquainted, just, I believe, about the time your grandfather and grandmother would be married, and with whom the ties of friendship has never been broken till now that death has cut the Gordian knot and robbed me, I dare say, of the person on earth that prized me most above the real value. I had been so fortunate as to meet some opportunities of shewing my affection to his family, and the warm influence of an affectionate disposition and an honest, grateful heart, joined to a luxuriant imagination, led him from that moment to regard me as something superexcellent, to which he or his could never be too much devoted. He is now escaped from a world of woe, and I am weak enough to regret it to a degree of folly that is neither expressible nor excusable. I have not indeed wept over his corse, but I have ruminated over the thousand tender circumstances that were, I may almost say, strewed over the whole space between the cradle and the grave, through the happiness and misery of threescore years, till I have lost half the flesh I had a month ago. It is indeed true I am rather the better as the worse of this, since I had enough and more than enough to spare, for I am never well when I look too like being so, and shall be probably freer of complaints now that I am grown very thin, if one can profit by any change which takes its rise from thoughtfulness, the greatest enemy of human happiness, and ever fitted to put us in tune to sing your "Song of Death" rather than to enjoy life. But, instead of murmuring, I ought to tell you I have heard of my sons in the Indies—James safe from battle and Anton returned to Bombay with a ship named the Racer, which he commands in the country trade, and which he has been so fortunate as to bring in from

China the first vessel of the season, and was just ready to set sail again for Bengal about Christmas last. Poor fellow! May Providence and fortune soon enable him to shift his sails, and stand for Britain, there to spend his future in happiness and undiminished worth of heart. If I should not live to see this, I will hope it may be a part of my Heaven to view it from a more exalted station, perhaps even to look over the congratulary stanzas my friend may honour him with on that occasion, in which, should there escape him some kind allusion to the days of former years, I have not ideas for celestial scenes if it would not brighten their surface. As a poet you ought to be able more than others to read the human heart, and to discover something I cannot describe which at present presides in mine. I believe local circumstances govern my thoughts more than any body's upon earth. It is now years since I left the room I had inhabited for forty years before, with intention to have the painting washed over and to return to it in a week or two. Afterwards I took that violent fever, in the recovery of which I first was so fortunate as to meet your "Cotter's Saturday Night"—an event to which I have since owed inestimable pleasure, and for which I shall ever retain the sincerest gratitude to that power which endowed the author with capacity to write and Miss Betty M'Adam with taste to hand me his works at a time when nothing less powerful could have animated or interested me. Unforeseen circumstances, added to an inward weakness of mind, has ever since procrastinated my return to my former apartment. I have just now resumed it, and with it all the awakened sense of every advantage I have for ever lost. Time, which softens sorrow, and blunts the keen edge of our passions, increases the weight, and makes us daily more sensible of the value of those numberless advantages which the attachment of respectable, warm, and steady friends adds to our consequence, comfort, and happiness. The tears that flow for a husband or a father's worth and affection burst a thousand new channels for themselves, besides the tide of fondness that at first overwhelms the soul, and as cool reason feels the force of those more than those they wear deeper in proportion as the other subsides, tho' this is not so amiable a distress, and will meet less sympathy, it is mixt with gall and aconite that nobody knows who has not tasted the helpless, unprotected state of womanhood, or has forgot that of childhood, torn from the nursing love and tenderness by which it was in use to be guarded, cherished, and protected. Forgive me, I cannot repeat what wrings these reflections from me at this moment. 'Tis sufficient apology for

uttering them to say that it helps to sweeten their bitterness to myself, and is the only method by which I shall endeavour to effect that end. Thus,

> When dark shades fly o'er th' uneven ground,
> Thick clouds grow thinner in their airy round.

This, I think, Dr. Burns, was what I once told you I persuaded myself I should find a great advantage of writing to a Bard, supposing I should ever meet one just of the character I had perhaps a little poetically figured out a poet to my imagination. Imagination still persuades me I have discovered one who realizes the fairy fiction, and if I am mistaken, I hope I shall never find out my error, since the illusion furnishes me a self-indulgence and satisfaction nothing else could replace. I shall long to see the pieces you promise me, but I need not tell you how much I long for every line from you ; I believe, though, more for your letters than even your verses. The last are for the world, the first for myself, and therefore are considered, as the writers say *a pretio affectionis*, with the redoubled value of a hidden treasure. By the by, I wish you would write on one size of paper, that I might lay the leaves like a book, and at once turn up the favourite idea of the minute, like a text of Scripture, for the solace of afflicted piety. I have sometimes thought of having your letters all transscribed for this very purpose, but my hand is not so glib as it has been to do it myself, and I cannot resolve to resign that pleasure to another on which I have so often and so sweetly feasted ; when a mind palled and disgusted with nine-tenths of the world, felt no relish for almost any other banquet. Meanwhile, I admire the good nature that makes you appear still pleased with mine, and good enough to answer them. At least write me now and then, for I can hardly indeed say you often answer the very questions to which I most earnestly wish a reply. Yet, spite of that, I never feel disappointed in reading what you are pleased to substitute in place of that reply, had I even asked if it was true that you were composing a tragedy on a subject in which I was much interested upon other accounts as well as the fame of the author. This is the last day of May. I thought of you all the twentieth, and found a new reason to regret the motives that had led you to quit your farm. The farmer of Ellisland had sometimes cattle to buy at the Fair here, and I always amused myself with remembering the possibility that I might be at home when he visited this neighbourhood. Consequently the first Sunday of that month, when the Church of Ayr used to be decorated with flowers for the

reception of the Judges, did not present a more gay holiday to my childish hope than the Dunlop-kirk races, which might be attended and celebrated by the presence of the Scots Bard on the twentieth —a circumstance which raised them in my estimation as much above the Olympick Games as a live dog is above a dead lion. For whatever I may think, I dare not wound your modesty by saying as much as Burns pleases me more than Homer. I meant this letter for a single one, and trust you would not grudge a groat to hear of me, but it has insensibly swelled to a second sheet, and I am ashamed it should cost you eight pence; nor can I at present send it otherwise. Yet I have been so long of writing—I mean so much longer than ordinary—that if you think of me at all, you must fancy some reason, perhaps believe me so capricious as to be offended, however foolishly, with something you said; in which case I am sure I would appear too unreasonable to escape contempt. Nor can I submit to the very shadow of this from you for a single moment. No, my good friend, I would rather make you pay a crown than run the least risque of it by a silence that would cost me much more than even my dearest letter can do you, since I value your esteem more than I suppose the disinterested spirit of the Bard would do any crown whatever, if it was not a crown of glory, and that I hope you have a long, long, long race to run before you attain in any other way but from the hand of Coila. My son John and his wife insist I shall this day go with them to Loudoun, from whence we return on Monday. I am therefore obliged to stop this letter, which, however little you may prize it, has taken me a week to scribble amid a thousand interruptions, so that, like old Hunter,[1] the Minister of Ayr, with his sermons and poems—for he too was a poet—I had not time to make it shorter; but I am half resolved for the future never to give you more than one sitting at a time, which will be good both for saving your purse and your eyes, and consequently claim your grateful thanks, though you know I have often alledged you had a knack for the last yourself by only reading on half of what I wrot. I am informed by a long letter from Mr. Moore and another from herself that my daughter Mrs. Vans and her family are come to England and settled at Exeter. I have not yet answered either of these letters, nor indeed could I, being so busie with this little, short, cheap, necessary note to you. You see, my friend, what rational, consistent creatures women, at least ladies, are. I believe in my conscience nothing on earth equals them, except men, and these men to be as extraordinary must be either fools, philosophers, or poets. Adieu! Tell me how you

find your elbow; what hope of promotion; if the little one drinks as well as its mother eats; and if you are writing a tragedy on Wallace Wight for a plaything to my little godson and a pleasure to, Dr. Sir, yours, FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) See *antea*, p. 101.

During this summer Creech wrote Burns proposing a third edition of the poems. Burns told Hill in the letter printed in *Chambers*, vol. iii. p. 260, that he had as yet taken no notice of the communication; but apparently he had consulted Mrs. Dunlop as to the contents. The edition did not of course appear till 1793.

It is not probable that there are any missing letters at this point. Burns was at Kilmarnock on 21st June at his brother's marriage, and, as will be seen from the following letter, called at Dunlop House on the occasion.

To BURNS.

DUNLOP, 12*th July* 1791.

Dear Sir—You bid me give you my opinion with regard to your Psalms and Prayers. As these ought surely to be the most sacred part of one's works, or at least of their words, I take it for granted this request of my friend includes an unrestrained priviledge to speak my mind likewise of all or any part of the rest, and that you renounce all right to be offended with my doing so. I shall therefore proceed to investigate your faults as I would wish to do my own, with a view to their amendment before they were to pass in final judgment before the great tribunal and the assembled world. I shall, like the prophets of old, cry to you aloud, and although, like them too, I must suffer a good deal myself in the execution of my office, perhaps you may be deaf like the unrepenting Jews, and like them doomed to the second death for stiffneckedly supporting errors to which a mind formed with a most uncommon share of native sensibility and delicacy cannot be blind, whatever some ill-grounded pride may make him pretend. Now, if this motive or some idea of interest forbids a man's retracting any one word he has once uttered, the fourth edition ought to be an exact copy of the third. If, on the contrary, it is not considered as degrading to that all-perfect being, a poet, to overhaul his writings, and expunge a good sentiment which his heart still avows, because it might have been more sublimely exprest, it is certainly beneath

him to ratify by repetition a mean phrase to which no sentiment is attached, or a sentiment which would disgrace any expression, or an idea that outrages decency and confounds modesty. If then it is allowed you, my dr. Sir, without seeming to be persuaded by your friends, like poor Dr. M'Gill,[1] to read your recantation, to obliterate whole pages free from any striking fault, and not wholly destitute of beauties, why be more scrupulous of giving what it is impossible you should defend, passages that it is next to impossible for me even to arraign, which I blush to mention, and cannot recall to your remembrance without injuring myself in your esteem? As a lady I would feel a degrading impropriety should you find me riddling my own ashes; as a woman I feel still more uneasie from a consciousness of the task I have undertaken, the most difficult friendship could appoint me. Nor could any less powerful motive prompt me to repeat to any man alive that I had read lines which I have so often wished to blot out as a foul stain upon the paper which presented them to the world, and, what was worse, to my own eye, as evincing a flow in the mind of a friend I liked and admired beyond most I had ever met in the course of so long a life, whose distinguishing goodness to me has been one of the greatest satisfactions of my latter days, is my pride, but is by those very lines precluded from being my boast, without subjecting myself to a degree of ridicule none of my sex ought to have courage for meeting. Indeed, dr. Burns, you must forgive me telling you how oft I have felt the mortifying truth that no lady could be justified in acknowledging that your book, spite of the many unspeakable advantages it possesses, had been a mean of recommending its author to her acquaintance or esteem while it contains six stanzas to be found in the Edinburgh edition at pages 26, 39, 97, 256, 283. Nay more, if you abstract the Psalms and Prayers, and insert these in a new corrected version, I will not be able to vindicate to my own heart that intimacy it has been so long my highest ambition and most unwearied endeavour to establish. In my opinion, you have no alternative but to print just as it stands, or make a thorough reformation such as may become the refinements expected from the last five or six years, more extensive acquaintance with polite scenes, polite authors, and those female companies to which your own merit has introduced you, and which, if you regard them, ought to set you above the little affectations of vice or ribaldry that are allowable in none, but contemptible in those who know better things, and are equal to the very best. If you are not too angry already, allow me, my Dr. Sir, to add one remark more.

There are some words which, although in themselves perfectly innocent, when uttered in the rustic simplicity of a peasant, custom has wholly prescribed in upper life, so that an author should have some very strong temptation before he introduce what it would be an insult to his company for a gentleman to read aloud. Now, whether that temptation subsists where you describe a dog sitting in the only way a dog could sit, or rather two dogs sitting as they could not possibly sit, both on one tail, I submit to your own opinion. Mine would have led me rather to fix the place where than the manner how, as capable of more variety. Would it hurt the spirit of the piece much had it only been

> Till tir'd at last wi' mony a race,
> They sat them down on a brae face,—

or

> They sat down by a quarry face.

Next time the same crambo occurs I would humbly propose to exchange the verses to chimes, and they should rattle in their ranks rare reeling rhymes or ranting rhymes. In the third introduction of this unfortunate word which happened to be hooted out of good company spite of all your favour for it, I must confess it seems to add to the ludicrous distress represented, and therefore have some title to keep its place, especially if, by being single, it does not throw that reflection of poverty of language ready to be levelled at all repetitions even of the best chosen words where they return frequently and tire the ear before it has forgot the jingle of the last page. Besides all this, I must still add that I will think it an improvement on the volume if you exchange "The Ordination" and "Calf" for "Tam o' Shanter" and "Queen Mary's Lament." Only, I am not quite certain if the polish you so much boast as your master stroke may not be a little tarnished by the sweat and smoke of one line which I felt rather a little too strong for me. I believe I told you once before that my friend the Doctor thought broad Scots, though very proper for Queen Mary to speak while she lived, not majestic enough for her to sing so long after she was dead. You see I do not always harp on one string. After dwelling with daily increasing delight on the innumerable beauties which crowd almost every page, and in some go infinite degrees beyond my poor talents for applause, where, as Addison, I think it is, says "Eternity would be too short to utter all their praise"—I have spent almost a week picking holes where I have so oft been enchanted with irresistible charms. Perhaps you may alledge I am put out of humour with the holes in my own work that makes

me fall foul of yours in this harsh manner; for I have done nothing but darned old sheets and table-cloths this two months, and the longer I sit, one would think found still the more to do—a thing very trying for that weak share of patience we poor females are endowed with; and your friend the Major would say a married man must know we are sometimes a little apt to vent our spleen at whatever comes in our way when things will not go just as we would have them. And, by the by, did you not second some maxims of that nature the other day more cordially than we could have expected from such a sworn friend of our sex? But I see none of you are to be trusted in bad company. Were I Mrs. Burns, I would as lief send you among a gang of thieves as into a knot of old batchelors, for I know no one affectation on earth so catching, or where one is so ready to forget they are not perfectly in earnest, as that of running down the women on all occasions; nor is there any course where one more frequently outruns both their happiness and respectability before they are aware of the consequence of uttering such counterfeit coin as never came from the mint of a poetic head or heart, where all bears the stamp of generosity, kindness, and unbounded love. Tell me, my good friend, am I not right? Are not these the very distinguishing characteristics of those favourites of the Muses, or have I stole as much of their enthusiasm as to figure to imagination something more sublime than the works of their Creator? Convince me that one poet is devoid of the bright warm glow of sympathetic tenderness for all that's fair and good, and is not even frequently given to mark those attributes where others miss them, and I shall be at least decidedly cured of ever believing the character of the man essentially necessary to the excellence of the poet—an error, if it really is one, in which my acquaintance with you has hitherto proved to confirm, instead of correcting my former opinions. Sixty-one years' experience of the world and all its deceptions have not yet taught me to separate the author entirely from his page, nor, while I read a letter a certain Bard wrote on the 11th of April, can I forbear persuading myself that I look through the very heart and soul of the writer, and acknowledging that in this instance at least God has not made his work for man to mend or for women to discover a fault in—a thing I fancy you begin to think one woman of your acquaintance is singularly fond of; whether you think she is qualified for it or not is another story. However, there was one fault of yours of which I have not yet said one word, that displeased me a great deal, and which I would have had great pleasure in being able to prevent. Indeed, I did

what I could, and have ever since regretted my want of success. That was your obstinacy in leaving us the day I saw you last. I was almost sorry for your brother's good luck—the greatest a man could have—since you tell me he is blest both in love and fortune. But his wedding [2] took you from us too soon. You will tell me I am neither just nor generous, since I can grudge the most material good to another at the expense of losing an agreeable afternoon visit myself, and forget that it was to that very wedding I owed seeing you at all, for which I ought sincerely and thankfully to give it my blessing, and wish them joy, as I really do with all my heart. I hope she is young and handsome, and deserves him. I durst not ask you before the company, for you said so much of his fondness for her, which I should otherwise have believed a matter of course, as to make me afraid she was only rich, and perhaps but homely or old—which might make one overact their part, the only thing which I could believe would incline YOU to lampoon a man's affection for the woman he married, although that man had not been a brother, and such a brother as he seems to be. For in those who appear suited to meet the most ample return, no degree of attachment ought to be held ridiculous. I should, on the contrary, have expected, had you stayed here that evening, to hear you repeat their Epithalamium in that divine spirit which created the milkwhite hawthorn in "The Cotter's Saturday Night." Old as I am, I admire and envy the feelings of the soul that could prompt that glorious stanza, and if it is possible for you to forget them so far as to profane the sacred scene with a sacriledgious sneer, I would be glad you went away so far that it could never reach my length to convince me 'tis fact, not declamation, that "All mankind are players," and poets the veriest puppets of the whole. But I will not believe it possible, spite of all you could say or swear, should you take it into your head to make oath with the Wangee rod in your hand that all the Exise laws in Britain could so far obliterate those dear ideas from a friend ever capable of forming them, as to laugh to-day at what yesterday you seemed to transcribe with the warmest blood that flowed about your heart, and made all mine flow in my eyes when I first read it. Indeed at that moment I thought you the first poet in the world. Since, I have met a man from London who tells me he would never grudge a journey to Scotland, had it done nothing but made him acquainted with Burns's poems. Yet I do not aver this was his favourite stanza, nor do I positively assert that gratitude won't make you as fond of him as I think you would be of your brother Exciseman [3] who writes Common Sense and

answers to Mr. Burke's book on the French Revolution. I think Payne's pamphlet is indeed much calculated to sow the seeds of discontent, if not revolution, in Britain next, and to be sure it is a most surprising revolution in the writer's situation that has already enabled him to have so active a share in the fate of two great nations as to attract by unavoidable consequence the notice of a third to whatever makes its appearance with the sanction of his name. You see I take it for granted you read whatever is meant in support of the equal and independent rights of man, with a view to abrogate all the partial distinctions of nobility and wealth, and destroy the claims of primogeniture along with the pageant of Royalty and all those hereditary honours which it is so natural for us to love and clasp at either in reversion or prospect while we revere our parents or are attracted to our children. Tell me, Dr. Burns, would fame have equal charms for you, could you conceive it no distinction to your child to have it told he was son to the great Ayrshire Bard that lived about the 1790, when all London, in consequence of his publication, talked Scots and wore tartan? For my part, I confess I sometimes for a moment wish I had been French; I should have been more reconciled to the extinction of my family had they been smothered in the ruins of general oblivion than seeing their memory sacrificed to folly, and sinking singly without any surrounding wont to divert my attention from the self-interesting, humbling depredation. If you deride this as vanity and silliness, remember it is sincerity, truth and nature, and I am writing to a friend to whom I am in the habit of saying all I think, and so must say many a foolish thing as well as this. I am stopped by an express from Loudoun Castle to tell me Lady Wallace is ill—I hope not dangerously; yet at fourscore every complaint becomes much too serious. Much reason have I to thank that kind Providence which has preserved her thread so long entire for me and mine for herself. When the change comes it must be to the better. She cannot fail of a reward, if an eternal attention to make others happy deserves to be so ourselves. Farewell! To-morrow I begin to sow a set of Holland shirts; so I may not write again for I don't know how long. The remembrance of this day's talk will make a while's silence I suppose a most pleasing dispensation, for I'm sure you must be heartily sick of this long drone—like a Whig preaching. But consider I had allowed you a longer respite than you have been used to from me almost since I wrot you first, and you are the only one I now sin against in the article of writing too much or too often; nor shall I be long guilty of this offence even to you, as every day increases

the difficulty both to the eyes and hand of, Dr. Burns, your sincere friend and obedient humble servt.,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Dr. M'Gill in April 1796 stopped proceedings in the heresy case against him by expressing deep regret for the disquiet he had caused, explaining the challenged passages in his book, and declaring his adherence to the standards of the Church on the points of doctrine in question.

(2) Gilbert Burns was married on the 21st June of this year at Kilmarnock to Miss Jean Breckenridge of that town.

(3) Thomas Paine was once in the Excise in England. He published a pamphlet entitled *Common Sense*, in 1776; and the first part of his *Rights of Man* was a reply to Burke's *Reflexions on the Revolution in France*.

Burns was now making preparations for leaving Ellisland and taking up his abode in Dumfries. He sold his crop in the third week of August, and a considerable time before that sent Mrs. Burns and the children to Ayrshire. It appears from the following letter that Mrs. Dunlop visited them there. She then for the first time set eyes on Jean Armour.

Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.

DUNLOP, 27*th Augst.* 1791.

Wishing to address the seat of the Muses, I borrow the pen of one of their votaries, and employ Jenny Little to write for me. Fatigued with my journey, oppressed with the cold, and the remembrance of those I left behind, I have indulged myself lying in bed these two days, from whence I dictate this to return my thanks to you and to the kind agreeable family from whom you procured me so hospitable and so elegant a reception; likewise to give you accounts of Mrs. Burns and her two little ones, for I did not see the eldest, he being with your mother. Mrs. Burns I found in all the rosy bloom of health and beauty. I was delighted with the cheerful openness of her countenance, the intelligence of her eyes, and her easy, modest, unaffected manners. My little godson is a perfect cherub, and will be a great fop, for he will not put on his hat since it lost the gold band at the fair. As for the little one, he is a jolly Bacchus, fit to bestride a hogs-

head, for every limb of him is like my waist. I thought to have blest you with their unexpected return, having discovered a retour chaise that would have landed them safe with you as yesterday, but three small-pox being struck out upon William's arm, and Mr. M'Kenzie apprehending he might still have two or three more, though he was scarcely at all sick, I durst not advise his mother to remove him. I shall be glad to hear your arrangements are on, and that Miss Stewart likes the[1] Prince of Abyssinia. She is almost the only young lady I ever met whose acquirements really increased the esteem for her family. I have seen many sewed maps, but never before met one of Scotland. That mother surely has merits whose early instruction impresses on her daughter's mind the love of her God and her country, and recommends those accomplishments that tends to make a worthy father happy. I rejoice that Jenny's great fist has filled up the paper, for if I had wrote myself you would not have got so easily off. I should have led you a dance as far as Windermere before I had bid you farewell. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*.

Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Ellisland,
Dumfries.

DUNLOP, *22nd Sept.* 1791.
[Franked by Kerr.]

Dear Sir—Whenever I got home I wished to write you, but, confined to bed, found it would not do; so employed Jenny Little to hold the pen; but on this, as well as other occasions, found how important the use of one's hand is, and that no one else can write for us the most insignificant line to a friend; for, spite of Jenny's being the most punctual clerk in the world, I felt it impossible to dictate what my own pen would of itself have tryed to express, nor could I for a moment throw aside some kind of awe for the comments of the poetess upon every word I should say. Lord knows how my mind has learnt to display itself with such barefaced audacity before the more apparently awful tribunal of the Bard himself; yet so it is, among the unaccountable oddities of womanhood; while I approach you fearless, her wit holds me in check. So you shall see a female infidel scream and tremble at the sight of a mouse, when she dares brave her Creator. What makes me more displeased with her copy than all the rest is that it has not been able to obtain me an answer, which I will, as long as I can, indulge the vanity of thinking might have been the consequence of its being traced over by my

own half-withered hand, for I dare not call it a fair one in any sense of the word. Indeed, I fear it will soon forget its cunning altogether in the writing way, its only practice now being to you, and that itself far less frequent than when you first permitted me to usurp your correspondence—a priviledge I suspect you have some thoughts of retracting, or at least grudge the cost and trouble of encouraging to that unreasonable frequence it has sometimes intruded itself both upon your purse and leisure. Yet, take courage, my good friend, for Mr. Kerr being come back from Ireland, you will not for the future pay more for my letter than it is worth, but have it at the real value for *nothing*, except the inestimable price of making me believe you receive it with pleasure by now and then affording me a few lines, and sometimes for a wonder saying as much in answer as to show you read the contents. The first instance of this I require will be your telling me if Mrs. Burns is returned, or if you have heard of the recovery of the child from that malady which I saw threatening him, and which I shall rejoice to hear is fairly over, as I am sure it would cast a cloud over hearts to which I wish eternal sunshine. I have not heard of Mrs. Henri's sailing yet; she has again changed her destination, and goes in the *Sally*—I believe just about this time. I hear the voice of the dear little Henri in every breeze. May kind providence calm the wind, and smooth every wave of their passage through the stormy voyage of their whole life! I have heard of Anthony; he has got or purchased a ship called the *Resolution* in the Bengal trade. I have heard of James; he has a small command of horse with Abercromby,[1] making roads on the Ghats of the Indies against or perhaps for Tippoo-Saib. I have a large family here—young ladies and old women—and am just about to lose one of the most favoured of my female friends, who first introduced you to my knowledge, for which I am busy sewing her an apron as a remembrance when she goes from us; nor does she leave a woman in Scotland who can supply her place to me. Indeed, she has a thousand merits, besides giving me your book, which give her the same claim on my esteem as this does on my gratitude. But fate dooms me, I believe, to mourn the loss or absence of every one I love, nor do I know how I should get on to my journey's end if I did not, instead of serious wailings, now and then try to laugh at or rhyme away sorrow. I meant to make Jenny transcribe some lines I had conned in the chaise alone, but my courage failed me. I don't know how it comes—I very seldom can exhibit verse but to that supreme judge to whom I once promised to show every

line I had or ever should write, and who in return promised always to keep them wholly to himself, and show me others in return, among which I shall beg that to the memory of the Earl of Glencairn, and, if you please, the song[2] you said you wrote, the subject of which seems to be on the recovery of Keith. She is not yet well; her elder sister has recovered her health, but has lost her whole wardrobe and paintings by a large trunk stolen or cut from the back of the carriage as her brother and she were travelling between Blair and Beith, on her return from Arran, where she had spent the summer, and was come in full contemplation of the Ayr races. But disappointment hangs over our most innocent and seemingly most certain enjoyment, and remorse sometimes hangs over those others which disappointment has been pleased to spare. What a sad, bad world this would make of it altogether if we take the voice of declamation for truth! Yet you say, and I half believe you, that none of us are perfectly in earnest when we think or say we are weary of it. At least, 'tis as we weary of our dinner, to be the more ready for supper; and we should be most grievously vext to be put to bed without it, or quietly hushed in the cold grave whenever we declare ourselves impatient for its composing rest. I remember you used likewise to tell me that you were sometimes very eager to begin a correspondence with the gentlemen, but always tired of it when once you saw their manner. I hope you don't find this the case with the ladies too, but their manner is too varied ever to be known. 'Tis to our changes half our charms we owe. Should those changes be to worse, perhaps as a change of air, even from good to bad, agrees sometimes with children, and has often been known to cure them of the chin-cough [whooping-cough], men, who are but bigger boys, may agree with similar alterations in the atmosphere at the mind or expression of us poor females, who were once young, and may be grown old, once rich and grown poor, or handsome and become homely. If so, this mixture of absurdities has been wisely given to make us the better half of creation, happier than we should otherwise have been. You see I am optimist as well as Voltaire. If I find leisure, I will enclose you the address of the Once Fair Forlorn to The Benevolent Genie[3] who kindly conducted her to the enchanted castle of Closeburn, after supplying her and her company with as much gold as they could desire, or as is seldom intrusted to the sons of Parnassus. But, dear Burns, it was on a very different subject I sit down to write you—one on which I shall make no comment till I hear from you. It was to inclose the within letter, which I

entreat you may return me with your sentiments, which I will not anticipate by expressing my own. Only in general I am no friend to epitaphs, and it has long been a maxim of mine—

> Those modes and merits marbles ne'er impart,
> Love graves them deepest on the living heart.

In the present case I am sure mine sincerely add,

> That name, dear youth, to latest time defend,
> Whose gentle virtues made mankind Thy friend.

Adieu, my dear Sir; do me the justice to reckon me among the sincerest, though perhaps the most insignificant of yours, and allow me to believe you a little mine. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Abercromby was ordered up from Bombay in the beginning of the year to support Lord Cornwallis, the Governor-General, in his first abortive campaign against Tippoo. He had to cross the Ghats with a heavy train.

(2) Nothing is known of this song.

(3) Probably verses of her own.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop, Dunlop House,
Stewarton, care of Mr. Ballantine, Ayr.

DUMFRIES, *26th Oct.* 1791.

Forgive me, Madam, for not writing you sooner. I have been measuring my land that I had sold the crop of; taking a house here in town, and furnishing it; preparing my horses, cows, farming things, etc., for sale next week; and in short, have not had a moment's rest to do any thing with a pen.

I highly approve of Mrs. Henri's idea. The lines she has written are at once simple and energetic. *As they are;* none of the amendments above the lines; is my judgement of the matter.

Cursed business just now interferes—I can do nothing but seal this, and inclose some verses I mentioned to you.—I am ever, Dear Madam, your obliged humble servt., R. B.

Mrs. Henri had written Burns before leaving for France with her child, probably sending for his criticism a suggested inscription for her husband's tombstone—the second enclosure in Mrs. Dunlop's last letter.

Ad. Mr. Robt. Burns, Ellisland,
by Dumfries.

Dunlop, *26th Oct.* 1791.[1]

Dr. Burns—I hope your not writing me is one of the greatest sins you shall ever be guilty of. Yet you know not the extent of that crime. Deprived as I am of all the friends of my former life, the notice of the Bard has been almost the only foreign circumstance of pleasure that has helpt to gild the gloom of a long train of domestic misfortunes, and reconcile me to the world and myself. If you withdraw it, you know not of what you deprive me. When reflection becomes intolerable, I lose it in writing to you, or when I am pleased, indulge the levity of momentary joy in scribbling what I would commit to no other eyes. I have perhaps deluded myself into a belief that you were not averse to an intercourse in which I found so much pleasure, and you have sometimes flattered my imagination so far as to say my letters afforded you a kind of similar indulgence. Female vanity is credulous, and my esteem for you too high not to believe you far above every affectation, even those that plead the excuse of being suggested by politeness or good-nature. I have therefore taken literally what perhaps was only words of course and meant nothing. If so, it is an error I am grievously vext to renounce, but yet would be sorry to persecute you to support, although those *jeux d'esprit*, which were addrest to a genius I admired and a man I believed to receive them with friendly partiality, would form an insipid amusement from the moment that opinion forsook me, and the more serious effusions of the mind cease to relieve its anguish when expected to be regarded with ridicule or contempt instead of that degree of approbation which gratifies us from a good and delights us from a great character, to whose superior talents the world has borne ample testimony, and from whom we teach ourselves to expect more than poor humanity can really equal, or we have any right to meet. If this is my present case, the discovery will rob me of one of the greatest, as well as last, entertainments of my life—one of the very few for which my soul retains a relish, but which it was perhaps too absurdly self-conceited in me to believe I was qualified to render agreeable to anybody but myself. To be sure, yours is an instructive silence, calculated to let me know both you and myself. If you persevere, and quit Ellisland without a word of animadversion on poor Susan's letter—a point so material to her sore wounded spirit—or on my two packets replete with rhymes, and all those little senseless reveries that speak the very soul of undisguised freedom and confidence, or else

the quintessence of folly in the writer, let me beg you, only tell me once for all. Have I done anything to disoblige one I so much wished to fix my friend? Or, on seeing me a little, have you no longer found me worthy of that goodness you before favoured me with, and even resolve to put it out of my power to ask after the charming little fellow of whose name I have been so proud? Do you think me too indifferent to your concerns to deserve information about what is of most consequence to yourself, such as the health of your family and your future destination? Or are you so perfectly indifferent about my happiness as not to care how much your neglect mortifies and distresses me. I am indeed ill at ease. Death has been busy at my side. Poor Lady Wallace snatched away in a moment when least looked for. The storm howling, and no accounts of poor Susan since she sailed; her child ill on the voyage and the tidings of death awaiting her arrival. The death of her kind protector, her constant friend and best parent—Heaven knows to what heart-wringing woes she, poor soul, is destined. As for my worthy old friend, she is only removed to happiness and Heaven. But what tender ideas does her departure awaken, and how does memory dwell on the events of those six and fourty years we two have passed together! Alas! they are meditations among the tombs, and I alone am left to tell them. And is it now you can forget me, when a poet might choose me for his theme, exposed to mourn the friends buried around me, and fear for those who remain; the double shock of absence and danger; yet absence, danger and death I believe less cruel than the loss of a friend present and in health. This were a new misfortune, one I have never experienced, and therefore would dread more than all the rest, which repetition has in some measure familiarized me to support. Don't you initiate me in a sort of knowledge my nature shrinks from by retracting that attentive kindness you had so long accustomed me to that time seemed to create a just title to its continuance, however little I can in any other respect have to plead. I am obliged to stop, but I beg you'll let me hear, if but by a single line, by return of post how the children are, and if you had both my letters and the one enclosed from Mrs. Henri. Farewell, and give me an address if you wish me writing in future, which I cannot bear to suppose you do not. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Note that this letter and Burns's last crossed one another.

Burns, having now lost the whole profits of the Edinburgh edition of his poems, except what lay in Gilbert's hands as a

loan, gave up the farm of Ellisland, and took up his abode in Dumfries as an exciseman in charge of a foot-walk on a salary of £70 a year. The family removed to Dumfries in November. The next letter from Burns refers to one he must have received from his friend announcing the approaching publication of Jenny Little's Poems.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop, Dunlop House, Stewarton.

DUMFRIES, 14*th Jany.* 1792.

You will scarce think it credible when I tell you, dear Madam, that ever since I wrote you last, I have actually not had time to write you again. Leaving my former habitation, settling here and getting deeply engaged in a line of our business to which I was an entire Stranger; not to mention hunting of Smugglers once or twice every week, and a ten days' jaunt into Edinr.[1]; these have so entirely engrossed my time and attention, that, except letters of indispensible business, I have not put pen to paper on any given subject since you heard from me. Now, that hurry is nearly over. I have got into the routine of my occupation, and have far less occupation than in my former place; and upon the whole, I have every reason to believe that I shall be much more comfortable for my change. Indeed, Change was, to me, become a matter of necessity. Ruin awaited me as a Farmer; though by that peculiar Good Luck that for some years past has attended all my motions, I have got rid of my farm with little, if any loss.[2]

Thus have I dedicated one page to my own concerns; and now I begin another with wishing, most sincerely wishing you the Complnts. of the season. Whatever number of years the Great Disposer of events may have allotted you, May the JOYS of those years very far overbalance the SORROWS! Notwithstanding your many tender Relatives and near Connections, I do not think that there is an individual in the world who shall more desire or enjoy the prolongation of your existence than I; yet there is a period beyond which life is a burden too heavy to be borne, and it must be a very ungenerous, selfish attachment that would wish to have a Friend present with us at the expense of making that friend miserable. As to your prediction of sixty-three, I laugh at it. You have a hale, antedeluvian constitution; and if you have any enemies in the world, wretches who are wicked enough to wish your departure from this state of Being, I have no doubt but you will hold out tough and hard, and live—and live—and live, till

these atrocious *Scelerats* gnash their teeth in the agonies of despair.

I most cordially congratulate you on your good news from Anthony. Pray, have you heard nothing lately of Mrs. Henri and her dear Babe? Her worth and her misfortunes would interest the most hardened Bandit in her fate. Oh, how often has my heart ached to agony, for the power, "To wipe away all tears from all eyes!"

I am glad to hear so good an account of Jenny Little's affairs. I have done next to nothing for her as yet, but I shall now set about and soon fill up my Subscription-bill.

I feel much for your loss in the late excellent Lady Wallace. Losing a Friend is a loss one can ill afford at any time, but taking an everlasting farewell of, the Friend of many years, is truly—distressing. That it may be long ere any of your friends have occasion to feel for You, what you now feel for her, is the ardent wish and prayer of, Dear Madam, your obliged and obedient humble servt., ROBT. BURNS.

(1) Burns went to Edinburgh on the 29th November and returned to Dumfries on 6th December. The only letters of this period that are preserved, besides one to Ainslie, are philandering and poetical epistles to Mrs. M'Lehose.

(2) This can only mean that he had not lost more than the capital with which he started farming. The alternative meaning of the words is impossible. Mrs. Burns said that they did not come empty-handed to Dumfries, but it is almost certain that she referred mainly to the farm "plenishing" with which they furnished partially at least the house in the Wee Vennel. We find, indeed, that Burns had cash in hand immediately after coming to Dumfries. He paid off his debt for Fergusson's tombstone, and sent John Ballantyne a draft for £32 for a bill he had drawn on Ballantyne's bank. But what money he had at command was clearly nothing else than the proceeds of the sales of his crop and stock, and the greater part of it must have been immediately swallowed up in the payment of the above and other debts. It is all but certain that if Burns had come to Dumfries with £300 in cash, besides or including the proceeds of his sales, he would not have begun housekeeping in the Wee Vennel, his removal from which in 1793 indicated an improvement in his circum-

stances, and he would have been under no necessity to incur new debts, as he afterwards told Gilbert he had done at this time.

Ad. Mr. Robert Burns, Dumfries.

Dunlop, *25th Janry.* 1792.
[Franked by Kerr.]

Dr. Sir—I have this afternoon yours. Your silence has been so long I could hardly persuade myself it was the produce of chance. With whatever reluctance I admitted the idea of its being a deliberate act of the kind, I found it one it was wholly impossible altogether to exclude. Yet I did not know how much impression it had made till I read yours. It says nothing to tell you it gave me pleasure; indeed I dare hardly affirm it did, since the native, unaffected kindness with which it was wrot created an agitation that made me perfectly sick for more than an hour after I read it first over, and although I must complain that you gave me no reply to what I asked you about Corbet, nor a single hint whether you had still any plan in view, or whether you could indulge me in any effort to assist it, yet you wrote so much like a friend that I must believe you in earnest, however improbable the alledgance of your not being able to find time to take up a pen for so many months but from necessity. Dear me, what a busy life yours must be. I wish you may not have been hunting the Whistle great part of your time. I am sure were I to pretend being so close employed, people would alledge I was hunting the gouk[1] the far greatest part of mine, although I have many useful occupations, and one of them has been, like you, hunting smugglers, and perhaps, like you too, in vain; for I have never been able to obtain intelligence of one pint of brandy, spite of all my assiduity. So all this week I have done nothing but read Wilson's[2] poems, which Jenny Little brought me, and I am almost sorry I have seen them, tho' they have afforded me some agreeable enough entertainment, and inspired me with surprise and a very considerable admiration of their author, who, I am told, was really in the situation he ludicrously enough describes of a travelling packman, and is now actually an operative weaver in the little village of Lochwinnoch, from which he names one of his pieces. If you have not seen this volume, let me know, that I may send it you, as it is the only one of the many spurious progeny to which your genius has given existence that has ever yet fallen in my way, that one is not ashamed to hear called poetry. This is the production of a

manly mind, not degraded by a wholly illiterate education, and although he has followed his great original in his greatest fault of admitting a little ribaldry, he has really, at least in my opinion, so much intrinsic worth and so many real beauties as to make one half forgive a folly they regret, and consider rather as a mean condescendence to the low-mindedness of others than an indulgence to himself in the man who does not require that pitiful resource often to please, and who but for this would hardly ever offend. You will wonder, after what I have said, why I should say I am almost sorry I have seen this book. It is, my good friend, for two reasons. I fear it will hurt Jenny by comparison, as it has all that masculine advantage over her that your sex generally have over ours on paper. Next, it spites me at my own line of life to see frequent returns of the *belle-lettre* where I least expected or wish to find it; and although I did with inexpressible delight admire, wonder at and court the acquaintance of a Bard, I own myself vext, degraded and disappointed when I am led to suspect one must not expect to find high life except below stairs, where I am by ten thousand reasons prohibited from seeking it out, and where its very frequency would even much diminish its value, since it would make us only consider as an imitative art what in one or two very singular instances must enchant us as the native spring of an amazingly superiour soul, endowed with intuitive force to discover all that the foremost men of their age or country can with every help be taught. In short, I do not wish to discover a great many Wilsons among the websters of Paisley, however much their appearance must raise the state of Scots knowledge and universal civilization in the eyes of strangers. Now, my dr. Burns, don't you think all this very little and narrow-souled in me? I am not sure but it is; yet 'tis what I feel, and therefore to you out it comes. If you can excuse me to myself, do it; if not, tell me your sentiments, and, enforced with all your commanding powers of expression, I daresay they may correct mine, which you know is the use of cultivating the intimacy of those we really esteem and regard, and from whom we never wish to differ in opinion.

I have not been well for some days past, my head confused, my face flushed, and my lips swell'd—all these the common indications of a complaint to which I rather hope than fear one day falling a prey, though, as the symptoms rather abate than increase, it may probably not be at this bout. Indeed, 'tis an event for the consummation of which I feel no immediate impatience nor no troublesome apprehension or anxious desire of

delay. If, indeed, my wishes are swayed towards a continuance in this much less interesting life than I once thought it, 'tis more on account of advantage to my girls than spleen to any creature whatever that I would spin out an existence I have no reason to believe wears even the face of importance to any thing but myself, were it not that you and one or two more sometimes are good-naturedly inclinable to favour me with that partial notice which is so flattering as to reconcile me to myself, and lead to a temporary forgetfulness of those past events that throw gall over the present, and destroy one's relish for or hope in the future. As to enemies, I don't believe I have one on the whole globe, and my God, who sees my heart, is witness it deserves none, since there is no living creature to which it wishes an ill, or from whom it supposes an injury it can resent. Were I to die at this moment, I am able to say to you and to myself it would be in peace and charity with all men, and, what is more, all women too. If more is required, Lord forgive me, for indeed my friendly intercourse and cordial approbation are confined to very narrow limits, and mine is like the Empress of Russia's [3] treaties — a peace of mutuality with the world, but an offensive and defensive alliance with almost none in that world; nor is there any phenomena in art or nature I can less account for than my choise of those very few who are exceptions to that apathy which encrusts my once warm affections, and seems to engross and concentrate all the cold remains unknowingly as to them and involuntarily as to myself. Have you, dr. Sir, any fancy for those useless observations that confound reason and suspend belief in experimental philosophy? If so, I can serve you up a feast. If not, serve this page as I alledge you have done many of mine; never read it; for it will prove tiresome and ridiculous. If you have that curiosity which some very great men have had to a degree as great as their fame, you will be interested as they have been, and perhaps led to trifle away some time as I have done in a way to be laughed at by others, and not a bit wiser or more certain yourself what to believe than when you begun. But to our experiments. Perhaps you already know that if you immerse a piece of glass wholly in water, so that the air gets at no part of it, in that situation you can cut it with a pair of scissors like a sheet of paper in what form you please, tho' not even then with a knife. The second is more complex and dubious, nor shall I so positively answer for its success. On this occasion I wish you were Sir Isaac Newton, and I at freedom to write you with the same liberty I do now. Yet I would not make the exchange

were not the metamorphosis to cease the moment the philosophick poet had answered my letter, as I would be too great a loser to give a Scots Bard for an English phlegmatic philosopher, of whom I fancy I should be tired the moment he had satisfied my ignorant curiosity. 2nd Experiment.—Take a hair or thread of any kind, about a quarter of a yard long. Pass it through a ring of any metal; tie the ends in a knot; seat yourself steady, resting your elbow, so as to prevent your hand shaking; then, taking the knot between your finger and thumb, hang the ring suspended over the center of a glass or tea-cup, where, in some time, which, if you are tolerably warm either in body or mind, will probably not exceed or even reach to half an hour, and is commonly much shorter, the ring will acquire a steady, pendulous motion, always increasing, till it strikes upon the sides of the dish, which it will continue doing, sometimes very irregularly, till it has sounded the exact number of the last past hour of the day; after which, without your being sensible why, the pendulous motion will change, or altogether cease, and be a good while before it takes place again, when it will just repeat the same course a second, third or fourth time, or as long as you have patience for the trial; your elbow always resting on the table where the glass or cup stands, and your hand in a hanging posture suspending the ring over it as still as you can hold it. This I have tried at every hour of the day, and almost of the night, at first in play to laugh at the fancy, but latterly with a much more than half converted faith that electricity, gravity, animal magnetizm, or in short nature, in some way or other intermixt a mysterious influence beyond my understanding in the result of this seemingly ridiculous, silly experiment, so like the unmeaning trifling of a child that I blushed to be seen try it, or to say I believed in the possibility of its truth. Now, I would wish to know if anybody of sense or observation is convinced, and would be glad if you never heard of such a thing before, that sometimes, when you have nothing else to do, and happen to think of me, that you will try this trick in remembrance of an absent friend, who may perhaps at the same moment be similarly employed, and will certainly if so be thinking on you, and wondering if you can be infected with her propensity to credulity or, like her, jealous that, without being sensible of it yourself, you do something to favour instead of do justice to the success of your expectation. Indeed I believe, were my faultering faith in this folly confirmed, it would serve to strengthen my hopes in Heaven, as it would be one more incomprehensible link of connexion added

to the large chain of the wonders of Almighty Providence in the glorious works of creation—every one of which to me bears a new witness of divine goodness and infinite mercy, from which beings even worse than myself shall not be excluded. But of this enough, and I dare say you will think a great deal too much. I have not heard of Mrs. Henri or the child for some time. There has been letters indeed to her sister, but as she was in the East country, I am hitherto uninformed of their contents. Neither have I heard of James since the retreat of Abercromby,[4] at which I begin to be somewhat alarmed. Yet happy, grateful and contented ought always that mother to remain whose principal fear is only for the safety of her children. I hope there is no fault in the silent ejaculation the heart breathes that that alone may be the nature of all my anxieties, and I shall without much thought or effort subscribe to the third petition in the Lord's Prayer for them, my friends and self, trusting that heavenly mercy will choose the best possible time for what must sooner or later be. I wished to write you when I was ill lest I should never find another opportunity, but the confusion in my head would not permit my doing it. Even after I began this I was not able to go on, and it has lain for some days. I am now pretty well again; indeed I was always going about, but very uneasily to myself, which is no longer the case. I heard from Mrs. Moore lately. They always ask most kindly after you, as if they were foreigners, and believed Dumfries was within a mile of Dunlop, or that you and I were living in the same house. How sadly are they mistaken, when we are almost as great strangers as if one of us were gone to London. But now that your apprenticeship, you say, is over, I trust we may meet oftener, at least poetically, and as Wilson says—

> Tho' miles in scores atween us lie,
> An' hills and seas, yet, hark! we'll try
> Out owre them a' to crack.
> . . . . . .

So much for a specimen of the Weaver's lays. It is now late; I am blind and drowsy; so I fear are you too. Yet could I longer see, I would not yet bid you adieu, for I feel in a very talkative mood, and would gladly go on as long as the paper would permit me, tho' you should give a curse at wasting your time so unconscionably. Perhaps some poor wretch of a smuggler, who gets a mile start of you while you are conning over this scrawl, will bless me from the very bottom of his very heart for

the delay of his ruin, or, as it's hard to say where a blessing lights, perhaps it may keep you poring at the very moment when you might otherwise have a very pretty chance of a broken head. Meanwhile, let me return all your good wishes tenfold upon your own head, and pray give my blessing to my godson, who without exaggeration I really think the finest boy I ever saw, and if Mrs. Burns always keeps him in the same command as when I saw him, I make no doubt he may be the greatest pleasure of both your lives long after you will have no other remembrance of, Dr. Burns, your sincere friend and humble servt.,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) April-fooling.

(2) Alexander Wilson, born at Paisley in 1766; published a volume of poems in 1790; emigrated to America in 1793, wrote the *American Ornithology* and died at Philadelphia in 1813.

(3) Catherine II.

(4) Lord Cornwallis, the Governor-General, himself took command of the forces operating against Tippoo Sultaun at the end of 1790, but his first campaign was practically a failure. He summoned Sir Robert Abercromby (younger brother of the great Sir Ralph), by this time Governor of Bombay, to come to his support from the East. But before Abercromby reached him, Cornwallis decided to abandon the attempt on Tippoo for the season, and the Bombay army, in which James Dunlop was serving with the 77th Regiment, was ordered to retreat, which it did in May.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House, Stewarton.

(With a sealed jar)

Dear Madam—I have just five minutes less than no time at all to answer your kind letter. Imprimis and in the first place, as to Mr. Corbet,[1] I have some faint hopes of seeing him here this season: if he come, it will be of essential service to me. Not that I have any immediate hopes of a Supervisorship; but there is what is called, a Port Division, here, and, *entre nous*, the present incumbent is so obnoxious, that Mr. C.'s presence will in all probability send him adrift into some other Division, and with equal probability will fix me in his stead. A Port Division

is twenty pounds a year more than any other Division, beside as much rum and brandy as will easily supply an ordinary family; which last consideration brings me to my second head of discourse, namely your unfortunate hunting of smugglers for a little brandy; an article I believe indeed very scarce in your country. I have however hunted these gentry to better purpose than you, and as a servant of my brother's goes from here to Mauchline to-morrow morning, I beg leave to send you by him a very small jar, sealed full of as genuine Nantz as ever I tasted. This freedom I hope you will forgive. The jar will reach you, I trust, by some safe channel, though by what channel, I shall leave my brother to direct.

Your little Godson sends his most grateful acknowledgments to you.

Wilson's book I have not seen; but will be much obliged to you for a sight of it. My glass is run. *A Dieu je vous commende!* ROBT. BURNS.

DUMFRIES, *3rd Feb.* 1792.

(1) In his letter of September of this year to Mr. Corbet, Burns expresses thanks for an act of kindness, and refers to the engrossing nature of the duties of his *new division.* It may reasonably be inferred, therefore, that Mr. Corbet did get him a port division within a year of his coming to Dumfries, and that he began in this year to draw the increased salary of £90, which Currie says was the limit of his emoluments from first to last. It appears (see *infra*, p. 350) that the enclosure in Mrs. Dunlop's letter of 4th May was a communication from Corbet, perhaps promising promotion to the poet.

Cornwallis at the end of 1791 again commenced serious operations against Tippoo, Sultaun of Mysore, and once more summoned Abercromby to his aid. The latter left Bombay in November, and the letter to which Mrs. Dunlop refers in her next to Burns must have been posted in that month. Long before it reached her the campaign was over, and Tippoo had made submission. Abercromby was again too late to take a very glorious part in the fighting. Before Cornwallis could make use of him and the Bombay army in the siege of Seringapatam the siege was virtually over. Abercromby's force had no share in the main assault which convinced the Sultaun that he must

give in, and by the time it was got into position there was really no more fighting to be done.

The reference in the following letter to the reflexions thrown on Abercromby is to a debate which took place in the House of Commons in February of this year, in which the Opposition attacked the general's conduct in the first campaign, Philip Francis declaring that his operations, especially his unfortunate retreat (ordered by Cornwallis of course), were "a disgrace to the British army," and even Fox lamenting "the disgraceful retreat of Abercromby." Dundas defended him, and his subsequent career was a sufficient answer to his detractors, albeit he was not a man of first-rate ability.

The reference to Sandie Wallace and the ladders is almost certainly to some despatch about the operations of Cornwallis's army in the latter part of 1791 after the suspension of the first main campaign against Tippoo,—which despatch Mrs. Dunlop must have misread, giving her grandson rather more glory than he had earned. Colonel Maxwell, brother of Lady Wallace and uncle of Sandie, had, as previously stated, a command under Cornwallis. In October of 1791 he was detailed to clear the enemy from the Barramaul. In November he attacked a fortified place called Kistnagherry, when a Captain Wallace led the right division of the force in an assault on an upper fort. Ladders were too late in coming up, and when they were posted the enemy hurled down rocks and broke them, and the attempt had to be given up after two hours' hard fighting. Mrs. Dunlop evidently believed that this Captain was her dear grandson, but it is quite plain from the records that the hero of this exploit was a Captain Wallace of the 74th Regiment, who was reported wounded in this affair, and afterwards distinguished himself in the operations at Seringapatam on 6th February of the following year, on which occasion Sandie Wallace was acting, as he probably was at Kistnagherry also, as aide-de-camp to his uncle. Sandie was at this time a lad of sixteen, and was therefore hardly likely in any case to be entrusted with a command of the importance of that with which his fond grandmother credited him.

Ad. Mr. Robt. Burns, Dumfries.

(*Mid-April* 1792.)
[Franked by Kerr on 20*th*.]

Did you, my dear Sir, allow me to flatter myself that you ever once reflected how long it might be since you heard from me last, I would make an apology to you for not writing you sooner. As it is, I am afraid I shall almost be at a loss to make one to myself for even doing it now. Yet I will, as my sex generally do, argue in favour of what I incline myself, and persuade myself it is an agreeable compliment paid to you, and that you naturally and sincerely feel grateful every time I take up the pen, even when you are obstinately or carelessly quite silent upon that and every other subject. You may, indeed urge in your own defence that you sent me a valuable present—a *strong* testimony of your kind remembrance, for which I had neither the gratitude nor even the good manners to thank you, and for which I still stand your unacknowledged debtor. Here I must in some sort plead guilty, since I must own I did not under my hand acknowledge the receipt of the hippocrene by the bearer, but only, in witness to his fidelity to his charge, and the sense I had of your kindness, sent you Wilson's poems, of which I begged your opinion as a leading card or sanction of my own, which I did not presume to tell you till, after hearing yours, I should take a cue from whether I was most disposed to agree or dispute your sentiments ; for, let me tell you, there is sometimes as much pleasure in fighting with a friend, if a clever one and one we truly like, as in implicit consent to those opinions we neither wish to destroy nor are able to confute ; and I hoped to have some pleasant sparring with you about this new poet's rural songs, town eclogues, and familiar epistles ; at least the portion of them submitted to the public which I sent, for I have seen several more, which he has sent to Jenny Little, and his disinterested, generous conduct to her leads me to feel just what he says himself in one of his pieces of another man—

> The mickle learning and sae little pride
> Soon gained the hearts o' the country side.

Yet as I never saw him I only judge from his works of the man, and that, you know, is frequently a very fallacious criterion of that heterogenous animal, tho' in honour of my noble penetration it has never yet deceived me, or done it so dexterously that, thank God ! I have in my youth been too shortsighted and in my riper years (not to call them by the rude epithet of old age) too blind

to discover any deception, for which credulity I have, I daresay, been oft laughed at, and sometimes, I am afraid, even by my good friend, Mr. Burns, who of all others has least excuse, since he has given a good deal of encouragement now and then to my opinions in his favour, both by his conduct to others and his invariable obliging appearance of goodwill to me and mine, when put in his head; for I am afraid you seldom think of the absent without being prompted, since, although you must be perfectly convinced I have no correspondent almost but yourself out of my own family, nor even there one to whom I write half so often, nor from whom in ordinary situations I would have the same pleasure in receiving a letter, and that I am never well and happy, never rightly myself when I cease pestering you with some nonsense or other; yet, were I silent to all eternity, you would never drop a single line to say "what ails my friend, or has she forgot me?" How very differently do I feel and act by you! Indeed, I own there is some odds due, and the exchange ought in justice to run against me. If our letters are to be reckoned *ad valorem*, as the writers say, I shall willingly give you two for one; nay, others would probably think I should say two dozen, and still be short of the mark were you to pay me in kind. But remember, I will grant you credit for no spirit but your own, not even the most genuine in Nantz. I think it is an Italian author says "He who sends me good spirits gives me more than all the rest of creation can bestow." For this present I have often been your debtor before, and in spite of all Solomon says for strong drink, I prefer the cordial dropt from a feather to that conveyed in a sealed jar were it Rosa Solis instead of your most excellent brandy, in which your friends here and your humble servant with the rest most cordially drank the donor's health; tho' for my own part I dare not affirm it was in an overflowing bumper, yet I believe I may venture to assert no one absent or present could have more relished the toast. Methinks, dr. Burns, I should have been loath to send to my friend a kind of remembrance so apt to occasion forgetfulness, which I suppose you by this time begin to suspect it has just done with me, since I don't think I was ever so long of writing you at any time since I had the pleasure of believing myself intitled to do it twice by your polite return to my first letter, and still more by the infinitely pleasing and flatteringly kind notice you have frequently since bestowed on that very correspondence which at other times I must confess you treat with a very humiliating degree of neglect, perfectly according with the inconsistencies you describe in man, and which are

generally ascribed to poets by the rest of the world, who envy or are insensible to their superior merits.

My good friend Willy Kerr, who, I believe, possesses the very best heart ever came from the hand of his Creator, and will never be exceeded by any future mortal production of omnipotence itself, has been very ill, and is still confined. Should I lose him, I doubt I must lose you too, for I should never have the conscience to let you pay for my letters; at least it would be a terrible check on my scribbling, and I dread the very death of yours. Judge, then, how earnestly I pray for this, I need not say friend of mine, but friend, if ever there was one, of all mankind.

I have heard from Mrs. Henri, and she is as well as I could expect, but far, far indeed from what either you or I would wish. I have also heard from India—my letters post at the outset of a new campaign. Let me trust in Heaven to guide its end to the safety of my children and the honour and advantage of my country, if honour or advantage can be reaped from those fields—a point in which I am rather undetermined. My poor little Sandie Wallace would see his first effort baffled when they were obliged to retire with those ladders they had so vainly endeavoured to plant, but I pity my son James yet more, if there is any foundation for the reflexions so freely thrown on the brave Abercromby, to whom he has been much obliged, and of whom I shall be extremely sorry his country ever find real cause to complain. As to Anton, he is just in the line I ought to be best pleased with; esteemed, industrious, and, from pure love of home, laboriously vigilant to acquire money necessary to his return, and which he has no regard for on any other account. John and his family all well that are, and more fast a-coming. So is it with Mrs. Vans too, but I am glad they are not in so great a hurry by one half of you. I hope they will never pretend to work double tides, unless Providence chooses to lay in for them double stores, as neither of them have apparently a double portion of talent to supply any deficiency might occur by the garrison's being overcrowded—a circumstance I suppose fortune kept in view when a certain friend of mine was always blest with couplets. I hope my fine little fellow is well; indeed, he alone is well worth half a dozen of ordinary infants. I never saw a more charming little creature alive. Do you think it possible he will grow no worse? for I am morally certain he can grow no better. I see you hold my philosophical experiment too cheap even to be worth laughing at, but I would have loved it better you had esteemed me enough just to tell me so openly and honestly. But, however ridiculous it

may appear to your wisdom, time only serves to confirm me in its truth, and I never try it without remembering you. One cause more this for repeating it oftener than once a day, tho', had you been so childish as to have paid a little more attention to a trifle, I had been foolish enough to find a pleasing importance in observing, I would have been still better pleased with my experiment, with you and with myself; for there is nothing I hate so much or can so little forgive as when my friends are a wonderful deal wiser than myself, especially if I am not perfectly sure but what I may be convicted of being particularly silly and credulous, but cannot doubt of their thinking me so in the meantime, and dare hardly hope for their conversion, even should I prove in the right in the very instance they condemn, and for which I must suffer ridicule and discredit in their eyes. But in the situation in which I am placed, it is no misfortune for a woman or her family that she can amuse herself with trifles while they are innocent, nor that she can even attach a consequence to them in her imagination that renders them seriously interesting to herself. Are they in themselves nothing, and her whole ideas mistake or nonsense? No matter. They are a blessed delusion, which gives some motion to the stagnant pool of life, and keeps alive that activity which was implanted for good ends in the human mind, and would perish if deprived of circulation. Our amusements are the necessary food of our affections, our benevolence, and every emotion of the female soul, our health, temper, spirits, almost our existence depends upon them; in short every passion or sensation, except perhaps love, which, till it is superannuated, I suppose is the ruling passion of the sex, and might possibly subsist alone, unsupported either by important occupation or trivial diversion, and be able to awaken insipidity or keep idleness from working mischief to oneself or others, from spreading tattles, or talking scandal, or writing poetry which some men think worse than either of these in a lady, and which, to be sure, is one of the last faults for which one would choose to be pointed out to the publick, tho' sometimes it is hardly in one's power to resist the temptation to commit it, or to confess it where they expect a kind benediction, a tender, sympathising absolution unfeignedly pronounced by some fellow sinner, who likes one the better for the unpardonable offence which in himself has been an imputed virtue, universally loved and admired. Farewell. Did I not promise neither to write so long nor so frequently as I had done while you lived in the country? Well, I have half stuck to my word, and that is a great deal in this world, as much as one

ought commonly to look for, and often much more than they will find. Few, however, can much disappoint me now; yet some can grievously. I expect to hear very soon from you. Don't try if you are one of that number; 'tis needless, for I assure you nobody has it more in their power; so don't ungenerously make use of it against, Dr. Sir, your sincere friend and obedient humble svt., FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS,
Officer of Excise at Dumfries.

My Dr. Burns—It is with pleasure I send you the inclosed, as it must show my friend I have not been forgetful of his interest while I was silent, nor when he seemed to have taken an oath not to dun me out of a single syllable more than I voluntarily bestowed upon him. The truth was that I often delayed writing in hope of hearing from Mr. Corbet, and at last felt ashamed to tell you I had wrot him and never got the smallest reply, lest you should imagine I harassed anyone else with as many disregarded epistles as I have frequently poured out upon you. Meantime be assured it is with the sincerest joy I congratulate myself and you on this event, not more pleasing to yourself, than it is to me, since I flatter myself you cannot help wishing me joy upon it, and so I shall have a sight of your hand, a thing I have in vain longed for this several months past. The time will come, my good friend, and perhaps at no distant date, when you will say to yourself and draw a bitter sigh from the bottom of your heart—"There was a period of my life when I had it always in my power to make one who esteemed me sincerely happy for the trouble of scratching a few lines on half a sheet of paper. What was I that could so repeatedly vex and distress her with omitting so easie a sacrifice to her friendship or even to her vanity, when, Heaven knows, she would have done anything in her power, and rejoiced in the ability to please or serve me? Alas! The time is past. What would I now give it were not?" This will one day be your soliloquy, and although I shall have forgiven you, will you be able to forgive yourself? I am in want of your consolation at this moment. I was miserable till the within for a moment gave a fillip to my spirits. One of the men on earth to whom my family lay under the most weighty obligations has shot himself through the heart a few days ago. Almost his last hours were spent in testifying kindness and goodwill to me and mine, nor can time, while sense remains in my breast, obliterate the feelings I must ever retain of the uncommon and unexpected friendship he

bestowed upon Mr. Dunlop from the first of his acquaintance to the last of his existence. My heart sinks within me at the recollection. Adieu.—Believe me, Dr. Sr., with truth and sincerity, your obliged and obedient humble servt.,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

DUNLOP, *4th May* 1792.

Send me your address, for I don't know what it ought to be.

Mr. ROBT. BURNS.

DUNLOP, *16th June* 1792.

O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us!
It wad frae monie a blunder free us
And foolish notion.

I have met that kind power, and to Him let me offer thanks. It is often said that the true value of a friend is to show us our faults, and teach us to make a true estimate of ourselves. After living threescore years in the world a child in this respect, an acquaintance with an admired poet has served to instruct me in this important point. I will not, I dare not say the instruction has been accompanyed with all that pleasure with which one generally expects to repay those hours spent for their improvement. To hear our faults is seldom agreeable; to feel the effects of them is still less so; but to mourn their depriving us of what we greatly value and most reluctantly resign is of all most intolerable. Yet this, I think, must be the only fruits of that unsuspected conviction your carelessness affords me of my own insignificance, even where prompted by esteem. I have used my most sincere efforts to please, and had it been in my power to serve, would have omitted no endeavour my imagination could have suggested, nor looked for any greater reward than the pleasure success would have afforded. Yet, with those dispositions commonly so prejudicing in the eyes of all, have I not been able to keep my ground with you. After labouring to my utmost for six years almost, I have the inexpressible mortification to be got far behind the point from whence I set out, without being able to say to what my lee-way is owing. Dr. Burns, do me the favour to tell me this; it is the only one I shall request, and your doing it will truly oblige me, as it may be useful in correcting my conduct to some other acquaintance. To the present I am afraid I can never expect to be able to compensate for errors I have not even delicacy to guess or deficiencies which no degree of goodwill, it seems, can counterbalance so far as to render their owner

any way interesting in your remembrance. Indeed, she could never claim a place there on any other title than a very strong ambition to obtain it and a sense of its value, which even present disappointment does not eradicate. Should I never write you again, which, unless you ask it, I certainly never will, I shall lose the correspondence with more regret than I ever quitted any other in my life. My silence, instead of proceeding from resentment at yours, will be wholly owing to that inexpressible something in a female mind that makes us feel our acquaintance intrusive the moment it ceases to be estimated above its worth, and forbids our obtruding it on any one where it has lost its relish, perhaps from time's betraying an insipidity that novelty disguised or politeness at first disavowed. If such was your politeness, I have owed it a great deal. It wore so much the face of friendship, vanity could never make the distinction, and the idea was much too flattering for me to reject, when the slightest shadow of it was held out by one whose talents I admired, and to whom the age and country in which I live does general homage. Other people may laugh at my folly for the silly credulity of believing for one second that *you* could find any thing acceptable in *my* letters. Yet when I read over yours, I cannot consider myself as wholly inexcusable for entertaining as long as possible an error so exalting, soothing and comfortable to myself, and from which I had a pride in thinking you, as well as I, drew some additional happiness, which you would not like to part with, although I never had the arrogance to believe you could set the hundred part of the consequence upon it which I have done, and still do, spite of the mortification I feel from your depriving me of its continuance. I shall remember with gratitude as well as pride the duration of those years when in sincerity of heart I named to myself the first of Bards and, in my opinion, one of the best of men, as interested in my happiness, attached to my family, and not disdaining to call himself my friend, nay, sometimes to employ that pen which, however much it delighted the world, never pleased more than at moments when it told me so in assuring me of his regard by those easie, unaffected expressions of kindness which nobody else that I know has so fully at command, and which are so powerfully formed to convey persuasion even of improbabilities as great as that of which I was glad to convince myself, and sorry and unwilling to give up the belief, were it only possible for me to retain it or figure to myself a reason for your never answering a line I have wrot you since the 3d of Febry. Was the present you then sent me intended as a parting one; as the waters of Lethe, instead of

a kind remembrance? If so, dr. Burns, whether shall I forget your past kindness or your present neglect. The one you can with a line obliterate; the other gratitude has inscribed, as Solomon says, upon the table of a heart from whence I much doubt if I or even you have powers to eraze it, since vanity will perpetually find an interested pleasure in retracing those impressions upon my memory which made me a great while happy, when hardly any thing else had power to please, and which I am sure I have never intentionaliy deserved to forfeit. In the beginning of May I sent you a letter I had from Mr. Corbet. I could not then trouble Mr. Kerr, who was ill, and fearing I had addrest it wrong—he always doing it for me since you have been left Ellisland—and that you might thus have mist getting it, and so not have wrot him, which I could hardly do myself without hearing from you, I begged your brother to let you know of Mr. Corbet's intelligence, unless he knew perhaps of your being gone to Edr., which I then suspected might be the case; otherwise I would have wrot you again myself. But recollecting that you used to be in this country about this season of the year, and hoping the baptism of your brother's boy might now be an additional inducement to procure us a visit, I have hitherto allowed time to wear over day by day, always thinking to-morrow we should see or hear of you. Neither has happened, and my patience, which was never great, is quite wore out. Blessed are they that expect nothing, for they shall never be disappointed. But this is a wise saying my heart recoils from. May Heaven enable me always to hope, even should I be for ever disappointed. Life wears over in the meantime, and the hours in which we have shared, or fancied we did so, in the esteem of those we wished to be distinguished by, are all this world have worth looking back to —a blessing which can neither be over-purchased or wholly taken away by any future event, except it should be the apostacy of the character we had greatly regarded. And this is a curse from which Heaven has hitherto guarded me so entirely that, thank God! the very image of suspicion never enters my mind concerning those few I have been fond to call my friends. I had last day a long kind letter from the Dr. [Moore]. He inquires earnestly after you, and writes so warmly, so like the friend I have ever found him, that I like the whole world the better for his sake. The same post brought me accounts of a new granddaughter, but I join the wise man—an old friend is like old wine; the new will never to me at least be like it. But what have I to do with any new? All I wish is to be able while I live to retain the old, or if

I cannot, to know why and how I have lost them. I will not entreat your writing—I do not even wish a letter if you had rather let it alone, since it's far better to be unhappy one's-self than a trouble to others to whom we can make no return, and to whom our best wishes communicate no pleasure. Even should it be so, you still have mine for yourself, your wife, your boys and all that is yours. O Burns! Is it thus I bid you farewell, and know not but it may be for ever? What short-sighted wretches we are! At least is FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Officer of Excise,
Port Division, Dumfries.

DUNLOP, 17*th July* 1792.

My Dr. Sir—I said I would never again write you unless you took the trouble of asking it. Will you absolve me from a promise I find it painful to myself to keep, and shall I still flatter myself that you will be pleased to hear from me, although you have convinced me a letter is at most a favour you may accept, but scorn to solicit? Well, be it so; even on that footing I will for once indulge myself. When we are much interested in any point we view it in different lights, and our opinions frequently change with the situations in which objects are placed. When I wrote last, I saw through the medium of selfishness and offended pride —a very magnifying glass for my own mortification and the blame it attached to your long silence, which I ought only to have construed into the whim of a poet or the indolence of a man, instead of imagining it the fickleness of friendship or the giddiness of dissipation, of which I ought not to believe you capable or myself deserving. I have just seen Fanny Burns. Your goodness to her awakes all the just admiration and esteem I have long felt for your character, and tells me that if I have forfeited the regard of one capable of such warm-hearted, generous kindness to an unprotected orphan girl, thrown upon their care, the fault as well as the misfortune must be my own, and there is hardly anything in my power which I would not gladly do to remove it, could I only guess the method of altering any impression accident, misrepresentation, or some folly of my own may have left upon your mind to my disadvantage. If I have ignorantly offended my friend, forget it. If I have seemed capricious, forgive it; or if nninterestingly insipid, compassionate an involuntary want which no endeavour can supply, and exert towards me the same disinterested good-nature you have bestowed upon your young cousin, whose innocent gratitude has just delighted me. I shall never

part with the swatch [sample] she left me of her wedding-gown, but preserve it with care as a relique of charming simplicity and a remembrance of one I have gloried in fancying my friend, who by this very token holds a still larger portion of my regard, however unfortunately I may have sunk in his estimation. Poor thing! how sincerely do I wish her happy, not only for her own sake as the reward of her early filial piety, but as I am sure her happiness must contribute to yours, in which I shall ever be warmly interested. I am sorry to think that is not at present so complete as I would wish, since I am told your youngest boy has been ill and Frank not well—a distress which, I am persuaded, you will feel with all a mother's tenderness, or perhaps even something still more wringing to the soul. At least such I have seen the anguish of such fathers as I think you will resemble most, tho' some people alledge I am in this greatly mistaken. Yet I am fond of my own opinion, and very unwilling to relinquish it, although its truth should cost you now and then a few more poignant pangs than hearts as indifferent as mine know either to feel or fear, but which are the price sensibility must pay for its transcendent joys, alone fitted to be the poet's portion, in which I shall rejoice to hear the health and prosperity of your present children and the safety of their mother on the expected future encrease makes a part, and that your own good spirits, with the good company, business and amusements Dumfries can afford, are able to make out all the rest. For, believe me, not your sister, mother, nor even your wife can more sincerely wish you well than I do. Allow me then to enquire for you and yours; make me a partner in your joys by telling me they are all got right again, and that you taste it with redoubled relish from the past alarm. Boast too, with a father's pride, of your eldest son's scholarship, which I hear is remarkable, and I will tell you in return that your brother's wife is observed to improve in favour and appearance daily since her marriage, so that neighbours say she is grown perfectly another woman—the surest mark on earth that she is happy, and consequently one may almost pronounce makes him so too. I am sorry to tell you I have lost my privilege of franking for a time, nor can I let you pay for a letter that I am not sure you will be pleased to receive; yet I must, unless you absolutely prohibit it under your hand, ask for my godson now and then, and therefore lodge in pledge the groats that will indemnify him for three-score questions which I may perhaps put before his father deigns to honour one of them with a reply. Yet, Dr. Burns, while you are a good father to your children, an affectionate friend to your relations, a good poet to

the world, an honour to Scotland, a good officer to Mr. Corbet, and the boast of Ayrshire, I shall venerate your name, court your notice, and be superlatively ambitious of your friendship, spite of all that carelessness you show for mine, which I must humbly and honestly confess is indeed very useless, but, notwithstanding that, truly sincere, and therefore your gratitude justly due to your most obedient humble sert., FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Officer of Excise,
Port Division, Dumfries.

My Dr. Sir—If a poem can be a present to a poet, perhaps the inclosed[1] may be acceptable. If a trifle from me can please, it will be welcome. If neither its own merits nor the hand it comes from can recommend it to a kind reception from you, let me still hope your gratitude to that sweet nymph Poesy, who promises you immortality, will prejudice you in favours of her meanest votary, so far as to induce you in return for this communication to honour me with a few remarks upon the performance itself, tho' I have not the vanity to expect the place or the writer attract one sentiment worth putting your name to, as you seem intirely to have forgot that of your humble sert., who always remembers you with regard.

DUNLOP, *26th July* 1792.

Dr. Burns, if you wish to write me, do it soon, as I mean to leave this in a fortnight at furthest for the East Country. If you really don't find any pleasure in doing it, I am sure I would be sorry to impose a disagreeable task on any body, especially one whose time is precious to themselves and others. Only tell me you find it inconvenient, and, however reluctantly, I will without complaint bid adieu to a pleasure I hoped would have lasted as long as myself, but to which I could never pretend any rational claim except the strong sense I have always had of its value.

[1] THE NEW WALK AT D——P, 26TH JULY 1792

Where from the East a riv'let draws its source,
And to the western shore impells its force,
A Gothic dome, defeating Time's pursuit,
Flaunts now triumphant in a birthday suit.
Old age with youth in borrow'd splendor vies,
And painted doors and corners strike your eyes;
Hibernian luster decorates that wall,
Where female courage guarded once our Hall.
Blessings without and hospitality within,
Like the old serpent here have cast the skin;

How shall I paint this alter'd scene to Thee,
A stranger now, alas ! to it and Me.
Changed with the place myself, alas ! I feel,
Yet true to friendship as the temper'd steel ;
Old walls, my friend, like quaries bear the stroke,
The heart yet strong though all the raffle's broke.
Thus too old friends stand faster than the new,
Firm at the heart though weather-beat to view ;
So Friendship built in characters of old,
(She now, I think, adopts a different mould),
Sole prey to years, her vet'ran favourites die,
But pride must blush to find the young ones fly.
. . . . . .

There are few periods of Burns's life about which so little is known as that which lies between his last letter to Mrs. Dunlop of 3rd February and that which follows. He wrote Hill, Cunningham, and James Clarke in February, but there are only three letters of his extant of the months that follow up till August—one of March to General Supervisor Leven, one of April to Creech, one of May to Johnson, and one of July to Stephen Clarke. Perhaps his negligence, which drew from Mrs. Dunlop so many reproaches, is sufficiently explained by the engrossing character of his duties, and by the first sentence of the letter from Annan, which has a remarkable family likeness to the apology he wrote to Creech in April for delaying to conclude arrangements for his new edition :— "Were it not that habit, as usual, has deadened conscience, my criminal indolence should lead me an uneasy life of reproach."

Compare his fuller apology to Cunningham written on 10th September of this year :—"Amid all my hurry of business, grinding the faces of the Publican and Sinner on the merciless wheels of the Excise ; making ballads and then singing them to my drink ; over and above all, the correcting the Press-work of two different publications." [The 1793 edition of his *Poems* and probably the fifth volume of the *Museum*.]

ANNAN WATER FOOT, 22*nd August* 1792.

Do not blame me for it, Madam. My own conscience, hackneyed and weather-beaten as it is in watching and reproving my vagaries, follies, indolence, etc., has continued to blame and punish me sufficiently. . . .

Do you think it possible, my dear and honoured friend, that I

could be so lost to gratitude for many favors, to esteem for much worth and to the honest, kind, pleasurable tie of, now, old acquaintance, and, I hope and am sure, of progressive, increasing friendship—as, for a single day, not to think of you—to ask the Fates what they are doing and about to do with my much-loved friend and her wide-scattered connexions, and to beg of them to be as kind to you and yours as they possibly can?

Apropos (though how it is apropos, I have not leisure to explain), do you not know that I am almost in love with an acquaintance of yours?—Almost! said I—I am in love, souse! over head and ears, deep as the most unfathomable abyss of the boundless ocean; but the word Love, owing to the *intermingledoms* of the good and the bad, the pure and the impure, in this world, being rather an equivocal term for expressing one's sentiments and sensations, I must do justice to the sacred purity of my attachment. Know, then, that the heart-struck awe; the distant humble approach; the delight we should have in gazing upon and listening to a Messenger of Heaven appearing in all the unspotted purity of his celestial home among the coarse, polluted, far inferior sons of men, to deliver to them tidings that make their hearts swim in joy and their imaginations soar in transport—such, so delighting and so pure, were the emotions of my soul on meeting the other day with Miss Lesley Baillie, your neighbour at Mayville. Mr. B., with his two daughters, accompanied by Mr. H. of G., passing through Dumfries a few days ago, on their way to England, did me the honor of calling on me; on which I took my horse (though God knows I could ill spare the time) and accompanied them fourteen or fifteen miles and dined and spent the day with them. 'Twas about nine, I think, when I left them; and, riding home, I composed the following ballad, of which you will probably think you have a dear bargain, as it will cost you another groat of postage. You must know that there is an old ballad beginning with—

> My bonnie Lizzie Bailie,
> I'll rowe thee in my plaidie, etc.

So I parodied it as follows, which is literally the first copy, "unanointed, unannealed," as Hamlet says:—

BONIE LESLEY.[1]

O saw ye bonie Lesley
  As she ga'ed o'er the Border?
She's gane, like Alexander,
  To spread her conquests farther!

To see her is to love her,
And love but her for ever:
For Nature made her what she is,
And never made anither!

Thou art a queen, fair Lesley,
Thy subjects, we before thee;
Thou art divine, fair Lesley,
The hearts o' men adore thee.

The Deil he could na scaith thee harm
Or aught that wad belang thee:
He'd look into thy bonie face
And say—"I canna wrang thee!"

The powers aboon will tent thee, above, watch over
Misfortune sha'na steer thee: molest
Thou'rt like themsel' sae lovely
That ill they'll ne'er let near thee.

Return again, fair Lesley,
Return to Caledonie!
That we may brag we hae a lass
There's nane again sae bonie!

So much for ballads. I regret that you are gone to the east country, as I am to be in Ayrshire in about a fortnight. This world of ours, notwithstanding it has many good things in it, yet it has ever had this curse, that two or three people who would be the happier the oftener they met together are, almost without exception, so placed as never to meet but once or twice a-year, which, considering the few years of a man's life, is a very great "evil under the sun," which I do not recollect that Solomon has mentioned in his catalogue of the miseries of man. I hope and believe that there is a state of existence beyond the grave, where the worthy of this life will renew their former intimacies, with this endearing addition, that "we meet to part no more."

Tell us, ye dead:
Will none of you in pity disclose the secret
What 'tis you are and we must shortly be?

A thousand times have I made this apostrophe to the departed sons of men, but not one of them has ever thought fit to answer the question. "O that some courteous ghost would blab it out!"—but it cannot be: you and I, my friend, must make the experiment by ourselves and for ourselves. However, I am so convinced that an unshaken faith in the doctrines of religion is not only necessary by making us better men, but also by making us happier men,

that I shall take every care that your little godson and every little creature that shall call me father shall be taught them.

So ends this heterogeneous letter, written at this wild place of the world, in the intervals of my labor of discharging a vessel of rum from Antigua. R. B.

(1) Published in vol. i. part ii. of Thomson's *Scottish Airs*, 1798. Miss Baillie married Mr. Robert Cumming of Logie, and died in Edinburgh, July 1843. Burns was just about to enter into correspondence with Thomson, and this was one of the first songs he sent for the new publication.

Ad. Mr. Robt. Burns, Officer of Excise,
Port Division, Dumfries.

Moreham, 30*th August* 1792.

The month of August has to me been the most interesting time of my life on many accounts. It is in general as to Britain as the first month of that season when men expect the return of their labours. To me, my good friend, it has given, and from me it has taken away what was most suited to contribute to my pains and pleasures. Nor have I always been enabled to say "Blessed be the name of August"; although in it was placed my marriage day, and on it I find renewed the testimony of a valued remembrance which my sorrowing soul had marked as forever lost. I am almost as fond of Miss L. Baillie as you are, and shall hereafter like her the more since the sight of her has been able to give a momentary resurrection to your departed attentions for one who feels them always so welcome. Believe me no music ever poets lent the spheres can sound more melodiously delightful even in their enraptured description than what soothes my eye or ear when your friendly hand plays one of those sweet voluntaries with which you were pleased to favour me last week, but of which you have for so long a tract of time been so very sparing that I might almost say in the words of Scripture "Yet a little while and you would have seen mine no more"—not from resentment, but purely from depression of spirits. However, thanks to the charms of the lovely Lesley, it is otherwise. Yet I am afraid your apropos is not so apropos as you may have been taught to expect. I wish it were, since I think beauty her smallest qualification. Pray, when you see her next, as I make no doubt but you will on her return, mention me as at least one that feels and does ample justice to all her merits, and regrets it when others do not the same in as quick and strong a degree as you seem to do. The

apology you make for your silence, were one requisite, would have been sufficient, but, dr. Sir, none is necessary. The greatest estimation I set on your letters, though in themselves the foremost I have ever seen in print or manuscript, is the pleasure you feel in addressing them to me. Should that subside, the salt would to me have lost its savour, and although they could never deserve to be trodden under foot, I will not say but I might one day or other turn and rend them in pieces. Heaven forbid you ever give me occasion to exhibit such destructive ferocity against those sacred, precious reliques of friendship and esteem, to which I trust every year shall add redoubled value by convincing me the brilliant flash of wit is not incompatible with the most steady strength of unshaken attachment, the manly obstinacy of unveering friendship, unsupported by every aid mean minds look up to, and equally independent of vanity and self-interest. Yes, dr. Burns, it only belongs to such extraordinary men as you to prove that a character capable of this exists elsewhere than in poetic fiction, and since perfection is not granted to humanity, let your weakness only lie in the direction of this singular accomplishment by aiming it towards so unequal an object as your humble servant, who cannot boast of possessing one single quality either to attract or reward such incredible virtue on your part, but by the perfect humility and gratitude with which it will ever be received on hers. Yours was delivered me the very morning after I reached this, and added much to the joy of my reception, tho' I could not guess how you had been able to time its arrival so exactly to tally with mine. Could our inclinations equally quadrate with each other, you would have said a few words of the piece I enclosed you, but perhaps you were too much intoxicate with beauty or rum to read it with the same pleasure I do your ballad, or perhaps it inspired something else which you don't chuse to impart. Pray be so good as let me know what you are about to publish, and on what footing you are doing it; if it is a new work, or a revisal of the former, and whether it is on your own account or that of a bookseller; to whom it is to be inscribed, and as many other particulars as you can take the trouble to tell me; especially if you have pruned it neatly to my taste, which I believe you now know as well as I do myself, and which to me is a point of more consequence than perhaps you believe, spite of the repeated times I have told you my sentiments with, I believe, unparalleled and perhaps unpardonable freedom. I have still no late letters from India. From France all is dark and gloomy, nor does one light cloud seem to rise in that horizon, from whence I doubt our very letters are now

intercepted, since all we write are returned here. My hope and fears attend the promised birth—a situation in which I am told you are just suited to sympathise. I shall be here yet at least a month, during which I shall be sorry if Ayrshire is honoured with your envyed presence, which I hope some favouring genie may retard till my return. It is too tantalizing to go forever like buckets in a well against those we wish most to see now and then, for I would not condemn my best friends to a very long tack of that company which sometimes of late has felt tiresome to myself, for which you have not been wholly blameless. Repent, make restitution, and establish me ever, Dr. Sir, your obliged and obedient humble sert., FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Officer of Excise,
Port Division, Dumfries.

Septbr. 23rd, Morhame 1792.

My ever honoured friend—This comes to let you know we are all well, and have got a little girl, for which blessed be God; hoping these few lines will find you in the same state or nearly approaching it, as I was told some time since that ought to be no distant prospect according to the then appearance. We are in the heart of harvest and the most tantalizing uncertain weather possible. Were you here, you would, if man were a creature susceptible of such a feeling, be thankful you were now no farmer. Yet I think John bears his fate with Christian patience, and neither the daughter, the wind, nor the rain provoke him beyond measure. As to myself, I have got what you call an *infernal* cold, and I am not sure if it would be ill named, for it is just such a one as, warmly lodged where one could so conveniently take sulphur as oft as they pleased, would very probably, were they sufficiently tormented otherwise, give them no trouble at all, although here, where every thing around is going on just as I would have it, I feel this very cold no agreeable companion, as it makes me half afraid to hang over Fanny with that cordial affection her weakness requires, her merit deserves, and I have come so far on purpose to bestow, and which I would regret she should buy at the price of infection to herself or her child, on whom, while I can persuade myself that Heaven guards beauty, innocence and youth, I will hope every blessing will be showered with an all-bounteous hand. Though we are bad judges of the distribution, at least in this case it has been different from what we would probably have chosen, since the beauty at present falls all to the mother's share. Had I been entrusted with the stewardship, I would have allotted

it otherwise. However, we ought to believe all is for the best. Alas! how hardly can I get my own mind at times brought to acquiesce in this heart-soothing proposition, when I tell you my poor Susan, after all her sufferings, is at this moment doomed to struggle with a severe, perhaps a fatal fever in a foreign country, torn with perpetual alarms, overrun with adverse foes on every side, and hourly threatened with still-increasing dangers, from which she wants the possibility of getting free, and the support of every earthly comfort except the friendship of one poor old man, who knows not what part to take, and may be the means of involving her child in future want by the very steps he would be prompted to take for its interest. Can I, do you think, be entirely an optimist, and consider my own lot and that of my children with that full confidence in, gratitude to, and affection for, that great First Cause from whom all our sorrows and all our joys must flow, and, while I mourn over those favours He has withdrawn, be enabled to acknowledge the unnumbered multitude that still remain to me, and to those I love most? Yet, let me acknowledge that unfeigned joy that dilates my soul when I behold the prosperity of some of my friends, the preservation of others, and the supporting, endearing qualities of mind that have been given to sustain the suffering souls of others doomed to almost more than mortal affliction. Let me trust the same hand will still lead us along that has oft before guided us through the dark vale of the Shadow of Death to this day's meridian sun, which, tho' not brightly shining in a wholly cloudless sky, may soon clear up to enliven that existence his vital rays are allowed to preserve. I shall not repine at the past, where upon the whole good has preponderate, but humbly entreat its continuance to the children of those worthy fathers whose approbation is my pride and joy, whose loss would sink me in unutterable sorrow, but who are, I am convinced, the favourites and darling care of the Master and Father of men and angels. May He exert His overruling mercies to bless you and yours, to recover my dr. Mrs. Henri, and bring back Mr. Moore to his anxious, worthy and affectionate wife. May one post acquaint me of all this, and I will in fervour of spirit bless that day more earnestly than Job cursed that of his birth, tho' my cold should then be ten times worse than it is. Nay, I hardly know the penalty I would refuse to submit to in exchange for such an accomplishment of my wishes. I will not even murmur though the same letter should tell me you had been in Ayrshire, and in the absence of, dr. Burns, your sincere friend and obedient, humble sert., though you know not, nor can I tell

you, what a pleasure that would disappoint me of, or how oft I have wished some accident would postpone your visit till I could share in it; though I somehow have always suspected myself to be less a favourite with you after every time we met than I had been before, while I was conscious you grew in grace with me—a sure sign this, that though you may excell me in poetic fancy, I am your superiour in steady friendship. Q.E.D.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

M. Henri, sen., had to flee to Switzerland on account of the Revolution troubles after his daughter-in-law's death, which had actually happened before this date. See next page. The child, Burns's "sweet flow'ret," had to be left behind in France, and was brought up by a faithful servant till his grandfather was enabled to return and resume his possessions, to which Mrs. Dunlop's grandson ultimately succeeded.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

DUMFRIES, 24*th September* 1792.

I have this moment, my dear Madam, yours of the twenty-third. All your other kind reproaches, your news, etc., are out of my head when I read and think on Mrs. Henri's situation. Good God! a heart-wounded helpless young woman—in a strange, foreign land, and that land convulsed with every horror that can harrow the human feelings—sick—looking, longing for a comforter, but finding none—a mother's feelings, too—but it is too much: He who wounded (He only can) may He heal! . . .

I wish the farmer great joy of his new acquisition to his family. . . . I cannot say that I give him joy of his life as a farmer. 'Tis, as a farmer paying a dear, unconscionable rent, a *cursed life!* As to a laird farming his own property; sowing his own corn in hope; and reaping it, in spite of brittle weather, in gladness, knowing that none can say unto him "what dost thou?"—fattening his herds; shearing his flocks; rejoicing at Christmas; and begetting sons and daughters until he be the venerated, grey-haired leader of a little tribe—'tis a heavenly life! but Devil take the life of reaping fruits that another must eat!

Well, your kind wishes will be gratified as to seeing me when I make my Ayrshire visit. I cannot leave Mrs. Burns till her nine months' race is run, which may perhaps be in three or four weeks. She, too, seems determined to make me the patriarchal leader of a band. However, if Heaven will be so obliging as let

me have them in the proportion of three boys to one girl, I shall be so much the more pleased. I hope, if I am spared with them, to show a set of boys that will do honour to my cares and name; but I am not equal to the task of rearing girls. Besides, I am too poor: a girl should always have a fortune. Apropos, your little godson is thriving charmingly, but is a very devil. He, though two years younger, has completely mastered his brother. Robert is indeed the mildest, gentlest creature I ever saw. He has a most surprising memory and is quite the pride of his schoolmaster.

You know how readily we get into prattle upon a subject dear to our heart: you can excuse it. God bless you and yours!

R. B.

A short note is here missing in which Mrs. Dunlop intimated to Burns the death of her daughter Susan. The event was notified in the *Scots Magazine* thus:—September 15, (died) at Muges, Aiguillon, Mrs. Henry, widow of the late James Henry, Esq.

To Mrs. Dunlop.

(Dumfries, *October* 1792.)

I had been from home and did not receive your letter untill my return the other day. What shall I say to comfort you, my much-valued, much-afflicted friend? I can but grieve with you: consolation I have none to offer, except that which religion holds out to the children of affliction—(*children of affliction!* how just the expression!)—and like every other family, they have matters among them which they hear, see and feel in a serious, all-important manner, of which the world has not, nor cares to have any idea. The world looks indifferently on, makes the passing remark, and proceeds to the next novel occurrence.

Alas, Madam! who would wish for many years? What is it but to drag existence until our joys gradually expire and leave us in a night of misery: like the gloom which blots out the stars, one by one, from the face of night and leaves us without a ray of comfort in the howling waste?

I am interrupted and must leave off. You shall soon hear from me again.

R. B.

Mr. Robt. Burns, Officer of Excise,
Port Division, Dumfries.

Morham, 5*th Novbr.* 1792.

My Dr. Burns—I have not been one day well since I wrot

you a hurried note just on receiving the intelligence of my poor Susan's departure from this, to her, a world of woe to gain that region for which her mind was most truly fitted, and where hope teaches us to look for the reward of all we esteem. I have on this occasion every consolation the case can admit of, since I am perfectly satisfied of the tenderness and affection with which she has been treated, and the fond protector she has secured for her little infant in his grandfather. Meanwhile a thousand strikingly touching circumstances of her last period of life serve to impress the inestimable value of her we have lost, and I can hardly suppress the ungenerous regret that she was not still retained where she never could have tasted ease, or relished enjoyment, and where, even had she been spared, it could not have been for me. I am hardly able to be out of bed; yet I must endeavour to get home, and shall if possible attempt it the day after to-morrow, which is Wednesday. I never stood so much in awe of a journey, or of meeting my own family. Why, my friend, have you not wrot me to hear that you and yours were all as well as I wish. To know you sympathized, as I am sure you do, in my grief had lifted a load from my heart, which feels, as it were, sinking into the grave. She, poor soul, wished me the amusement of your company when I parted with her last, and perhaps this is one reason more to make me wish it ardently now that I have parted with her forever. I therefore still hope you have not yet made your visit to Ayrshire, though I am uneasie from an apprehension something may be wrong with Mrs. Burns or the children. That alone, I fear, can have retarded you so long beyond your intended time; nor would I purchase even the satisfaction of seeing you at such an expense to your happiness. My son has just ended his harvest, and escorts me home. Indeed I could not now go alone, nor have I hitherto been fit to undertake the trial. I hope to reach Dunlop against Friday, by which time perhaps this may reach you. Nothing will now keep me longer absent but the real incapacity of attempting at a return. You remember the epitaph I once showed you. I shall certainly now have it executed. The desire of her soul was accomplished on the 15th of September, the day of the birth of my little grandchild, who for that reason wears the name of Magdalen Susanna. How poor the consolation of a stone! Yet here it seems to tend to some purpose.

Should ocean e'er restore our orphan son
To the sad shores where life's lone course begun,
This to his weeping eyes may point the spot

Where his loved parents ne'er can be forgot,
Tell where his mother drew her early breath,
And where his father fell a prey to death.
. . . . . .

Farewell, my dr. Sir. What a theme were this for your pen, or for your heart, if tenderness belongs to a poet.—Yours,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

The following letter, which has been collated with the original MS. in the Adam Collection, is of special interest as illustrating Currie's editorial practice. For instance, in the first sentence of the fourth paragraph he deleted the six words that follow "dramas." In the second sentence of the fifth paragraph he substituted "that of the imagination" for "the reach of invention" and "one another" for "similar passages." Still more remarkable is his omission, from the second sentence of the sixth paragraph, of the whole clause, "And in our theatre here 'God save the King' has met with some groans and hisses, while 'Ça ira' has been repeatedly called for." The next sentence Currie closed at "gag me." And deleting "In the meantime," which follows "interpreter," he began a new paragraph with "I have taken."

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

DUMFRIES, *6th December* 1792.

I shall be in Ayrshire, I think, next week; and if at all possible, I shall certainly, my much esteemed friend, have the pleasure of visiting at Dunlop house.

Alas, Madam! how seldom do we meet in this world that we have reason to congratulate ourselves on accessions of happiness! I have not passed half the ordinary term of an old man's life, and yet I scarcely look over the obituary of a Newspaper that I do not see some names that I have known, and which I, and other acquaintances, little thought to meet with there so soon. Every other instance of the mortality of our kind makes us cast a horrid anxious look into the dreadful abyss of uncertainty, and shudder with apprehension for our own fate. But of how different an importance are the lives of different Individuals! Nay, of what importance is one period of the same life, more than another? A few years ago, I could have lain down in the dust, careless, as the book of Job elegantly says, "careless of the voice of the morning"; and now, not a few, and these most helpless, individuals would, on losing me and my exertions, lose both their

"staff and shield." By the way, these helpless ones have lately got an addition; Mrs. B. having given me a fine girl[1] since I wrote you. There is a charming passage in Thomson's *Edward and Eleonora*:—

> The valiant, *in himself*, what can he suffer?
> Or what need he regard his single woes?
> But when, alas, he multiplies himself
> To dearer selves, to the loved tender Fair,
> To those whose bliss, whose beings hang upon him,
> To helpless children! then, O then! he feels
> The point of misery festering in his heart,
> And weakly weeps his fortune like a coward.

As I am got in the way of quotations, I shall give you another from the same piece, peculiarly—alas, too peculiarly apposite, my dear Madam, to your present frame of mind:—

> Who so unworthy but may proudly deck him
> With his fair-weather virtue, that exults
> Glad o'er the summer main? the tempest comes,
> The rough winds rage aloud; when from the helm
> This virtue shrinks, and in a corner lies
> Lamenting—Heavens! if privileged from trial,
> How cheap a thing were virtue!

I do not remember to have heard you mention Thomson's Dramas as favourite walks of your reading. I pick up favorite quotations, and store them in my mind as ready armour, offensive, or defensive, amid the struggle of this turbulent existence. Of these is one, a very favorite one, from Thomson's *Alfred*:—

> Attach thee firmly to the virtuous deeds
> And offices of life; to life itself,
> With all its vain and transient joys, sit loose.

Probably I have quoted some of these to you formerly, as indeed when I write from the heart, I am apt to be guilty of such repetitions. The compass of the heart, in the musical style of expression, is much more bounded, than the reach of invention; so the notes of the former are extremely apt to run into similar passages; but in return for the paucity of its compass, its notes are much more sweet. I must still give you another quotation, which I am almost sure I have given you before, but I cannot resist the temptation. The subject is Religion; speaking of its importance to mankind, the author says:—

> 'Tis this, my Friend, that streaks our morning bright;
> 'Tis this that gilds the horrors of our night.
> When wealth forsakes us; and when friends are few;
> When friends are faithless, and when foes pursue;

'Tis this that wards the blow, or stills the smart;
Disarms affliction, or repels his dart:
Within the breast bids purest raptures rise;
Bids smiling conscience spread her cloudless skies.

I see you are in for double postage, so I shall e'en scribble out t'other sheet. We in this country, here have many alarms of the Reform, or rather the Republican spirit, of your part of the kingdom. Indeed, we are a good deal in commotion ourselves; and in our theatre here "God save the King" has met with some groans and hisses, while "Ça ira" has been repeatedly called for. For me, I am a *Placeman*, you know; a very humble one indeed Heaven knows, but still so much so as to gag me from joining in the cry. What my private sentiments are, you will find out without an interpreter. In the mean time I have taken up the subject in another view, and the other day, for a pretty Actress's benefit-night, I wrote an address, which I will give on the other page, called "The Rights of Woman."

I shall have the honour of receiving your criticisms in person at Dunlop. R. B.

(1) Elizabeth Riddell, born 21st November 1792; died September 1795.

THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN

An Occasional Address spoken by Miss Fontenelle on her Benefit-Night

While Europe's eye is fix'd on mighty things:
The fate of empires and the fall of kings;
While quacks of state must each produce his plan;
And even children lisp *The Rights of Man;*
Amid this mighty fuss just let me mention
The Rights of Woman merit some attention.

First, in the sexes' intermix'd connection,
One sacred Right of Woman is *protection:*
The tender flower that lifts its head, elate,
Helpless must fall before the blasts of fate,
Sunk on the earth, defac'd its lovely form,
Unless your shelter th' impending storm.

Our second Right—but needless here is caution,
To keep that right inviolate's the fashion:
Each man of sense has it so full before him,
He'd die before he'd wrong it—'tis *decorum:*
There was, indeed, in far less polish'd days,
A time when rough rude man had naughty ways:
Would swagger, swear, get drunk, kick up a riot,
Nay, even thus invade a lady's quiet.

Now, thank our stars! these Gothic days are fled;
Now, well-bred men—and you are all well-bred—
Most justly think (and we are much the gainers)
Such conduct neither spirit, wit, nor manners.

For Right the third, our last, our best, our dearest,
That right to fluttering female hearts the nearest;
Which even the Rights of Kings, in low prostration,
Most humbly own—'tis dear, dear *admiration!*
In that blest sphere alone we live and move;
There taste that life of life—immortal love.
Smiles, glances, sighs, tears, fits, flirtations, airs,
'Gainst such an host what flinty savage dares—
When awful Beauty joins with all her charms,
Who is so rash as rise in rebel arms?

But truce with kings and truce with constitutions,
With bloody armaments and revolutions;
Let Majesty your first attention summon,
Ah! *ça ira!* THE MAJESTY OF WOMAN!

Burns did visit Ayrshire this month, and spent four days at Dunlop. A fellow-guest with him was Dr. James M'Kittrick Adair, his comrade in the Devon Valley tour of 1787, and husband of Charlotte Hamilton. For Dr. Adair's connexion with Mrs. Dunlop see *antea*, p. 138.

Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Excise Officer,
Port Division, Dumfries.

30*th Decbr.* 1792.

The sportive rays of chearful morn
That wake the eastern sky
Revive not fainting nature's life
Like friendship's vivid eye.
But ah! the wave that in the west
Infolds departed day,
Ne'er wraps the world in deadly night
Till that bright beam's away.

I cite not this as a pretty enough extempore thought, nor even, my friend, as the fatal foreboding of a mind viewing through the thick mist of melancholy all the horrors of an unavoidable event she justly stood in awe of encountering, although either of these might have given the lines, in my opinion, no bad right to the place in which they stand. But I trace them over, as the only really valued production ever fell from their author's pen, since they alone carried an enviable palm by having stopt for twenty-four hours the falling of that star of life they attempted to cele-

brate, and procured the continuance for one day of that chearing beam by which Heaven has chosen to pour its best light upon this lower world, and soothe our most racking inquietude.[1] I was so ill that morning you left us I could not leave my bed till towards dinner time. It was no cordial for my disappointment in not seeing you when I heard from Keith how much you were complaining[2] yourself, and when Adair on his arrival confirmed the continuance of your still doing the same as long as he and you were together. Yet I hoped we should have had a line from your brother's to say you were better, or to ask for me, as I surely would for you had I been able. Indeed, as I was, I should never have made out to bid farewell, a word which, in the situation I then stood, would have taken a full flow of health and good spirits to pronounce with undisturbed propriety. My gout became the rose, and so bad that Mr. Adair was so good as stay with me several days longer than he had meant on that account. Yet, after he went, it became the jaundice, and still continues so, though not with its first violence. Indeed, before it showed itself in its proper colours, I was one night so bad I never expected to behold the next morning sun, and was half tempted to do what I never did before—that was to call up the servants from their beds, or some of the family, to get me fairly o'er-seen; but I did not yield to the pusillanimous idea, and in reward of my courage and quietness, behold! here I am still, much better, tho' I confess not much happier than when I was at the worst, since the main distress I hinted to you still remains in the same indeterminate state as it then did. Indeed, other vexatious circumstances have mouldered away; such as, the vessel with the servants[3] has reached land, tho' not their wished-for harbour. They are, God be praised! safe in England, and not sacrificed to the manes of the unfortunate pair whose fortunes they followed through all their tempestuous fate. O Burns! only a heart like yours can guess with what pangs mine has awaited the tidings of their gaining the British strand, and how I yet dread to hear the last accounts of my poor Susan, and the situation of her poor infant from those faithful witnesses of all those scenes from which I, alas! was so far removed, and I dare say so often and so earnestly wished for. Perhaps Providence sees good to remove us frequently from what we love most here, that we may with more ease make the last and great removal by not having set up our rest on this side Jordan. But why do I surfeit you with this yellow melancholy which discolours my own imagination, and can only jaundice yours too, if that is not too

much the case already — a circumstance it distresses me to believe, but too possible from what I saw, and yet more from what I know of the natural effects of your changed habits of life —deprived of that free air and wholesome labour, the portion of your early, thoughtless days. You say man was made to mourn. I again say we were made to work, to laugh and sing, to be happy ourselves and make others so, as far as is in our power; and when it will not do in one way, we should try to strike out another in which it will succeed better. For this I write you, for this I cultivate your acquaintance, while I almost fly every other, and could I only say to myself that reading this half-sheet would lift as great a weight from your breast as writing it suspends for the moment from my own, it would inspire a flow beyond the prescription of the wise King Solomon himself for the time, and much more permanent for what is to follow than that receipt of his which you must understand better than I, but from which I doubt one can draw but a very temporary relief, and that, too, cruelly plundered by all the blue devils before we have well ascertained its possession. Yet I am no fair judge, since among other aversions that haunt me just now is a strong one for the bottle, and I had much rather have recourse to the poor houlet [owl] for a companion than to the liveliest *bon vivant* ever inspired by Burgundy or Champagne. Yet, dr. Burns, there never was that settled sadness in my soul that could stand against that consuming fire beaming from the bright eye of one I knew or believed to be my friend, and felt to be a friend that soul clung to from choice in her mirthful as well as in her melancholy mood, and met no saturnine reproach to make her ashamed of the follies incident to either, but a kind, unaweing, inviting fraternity, that at once soothed and encouraged those social affections which seemed *in articulo mortis* till revived by this cherishing, benevolent warmth from a kindred spirit. By the by, I should not have forgiven myself had I ended without recalling to your remembrance a conversation where I supported an argument against your much superior delicacy of mind in a way that I doubt must sink your friend in your eyes in the same ratio it raised you in those of most of the hearers, where you shone greatly at my expense, and that too drawn from the stock where a woman can, I think, least spare the costs that contribute to her opponent's triumph. The question was of conjugal affection as affecting marriage settlements. I exprest something revolting to the female heart in a man's reducing a woman's provision to prevent her making a second marriage; at which you seemed

greatly surprized and apparently shocked. This silenced me, but without altering my sentiments, which still are that starting such an idea is inimical to every feeling that affection dictates; that no one wishes to be bound down by an imposed obligation to the spontaneous duties of kindness they wish to perform with unrestrained freedom, independent of controul, and outrunning even request. One does not brook a doubt of their inclining to perform, the most kind, the most respectable and the most steady part which they feel at the moment their own hearts would naturally prompt, without its being laid down by some one else, and enforced by some little mean pecuniary reward or punishment, tending to lessen and degrade the mother in the eyes of those children to whom it is become material she should be rendered more august than ever, since she is to stand to them for all or nothing as a parent, and now an only one. It likewise lessens her to herself to find doubts where it has been her crown of glory to fix confidence and esteem, and though she might be flattered by the desire to live for ever, unrivalled in her heart, there is nothing to please in the precaution that, without preventing the internal, only fines one for the external change they make, not by the disposal of the heart, but the pledging the hand. I own, too, I should believe any man, when he propounded the reduction of a few pounds, meant, like the Mosaic Law against theft, to enact a fourfold restitution of what he set very little value upon. I am sure these are natural ideas, uninfluenced by interest; for I felt them rise in my own mind on reading a contract where there was a clause of that sort, although I, the moment it was in my power, renounced the whole sum from which the deduction was taken, and at that moment resolved never to pocket one farthing from the estate whose owner thus mistook the heart that throbbed but for him. Do you recollect a speech in Glover's *Leonidas*[4] "Till life preferred by my inglorious colleague left no choice but what in me were infamy to shun, not virtue to accept." This may not strike you as put to the purpose, but does me. However, apropos to citations, they are only the privilege of a feminine character, which wants strength to suggest its own expression, and not allowable to that manly originality of soul whose feelings blaze with tenfold fire in their own inimitable energy of words. 'Tis yours, my friend, to lend but never to borrow the feeble colouring of another's thought; to be cited, but never to cite. 'Tis like the king begging from the beggar to save his own hoarded, useless superfluity. But I think more just now of your health than of all your writing, or even of the talents that first

inspired them; and when I see you ill, I forget the poet to regret the friend, the father, the man and the husband—every one of which demands your care for the sake of those to whom each is inestimable. Have you still a horse? If so, ride him frequently; if you have not a little garden, get one, not for the convenience, but for the amusement and the wholesome labour it would afford. Manual exertions and the smell of the red earth are sovereign specifics in complaints like yours, especially in the spring of the year and the morning of the day, and if saucy pride, which often, like a busybody thrusts in between us and our duties as well as our pleasures, should remonstrate that it was below a British Bard to plant cabbages like an old German Elector,[5] sure the culture of roses, hyacinths, pinks and daisies is perfectly suited for him whose fancy shall all the while be twisting their sweets into a poetic garland, or moralizing over the rise or decay of every bud and bloom to which he is giving birth. But a man had better plant potatoes than have his peace wrecked with relaxation and vapours for which he may in vain drain all the volumes of Galen and Hippocrates or the deceiving potions of their successors. I asked you half a dozen times when you were here, but could never draw an answer; for, absent and present, you think on something else when I speak to you, and leave me at a loss to guess whether my question has been disagreeably impertinent or only unobserved. However, supposing only the last, I venture to put it once more—Should it be in Mr. C——'s power to slip you into a Supervisorship, and should it be in mine to urge his doing so, would it be agreeable to you that I made the trial, or would the increase of business and perhaps change of place prevent your wishing such a promotion to take place as rather burthensome to yourself or chargeable to your family? Don't be hurt by a query perhaps *sans consequence*, but answer it in sincerity of heart to a friend whose good wishes is probably all she can throw into the scale of your fortune, and who pleases herself in now and then gauging the depths and shallows of your ambition, and, as far as she can, diving into every cranny and creek of your temper, your desires and the modes by which you would chuse they should be promoted. Meantime let me recommend moderation in all things, whether pints or politics, since both may be beneficial to the constitution, and do harm to nothing. If you exceed in any thing, follow my example, and let it be in writing, not however pirating, for I honestly assure you one page of your manuscript gives me more pleasure than half a dozen of those sheets all the world share with me, although, had the last

never appeared, I had probably never have felt the full relish of the first; fame is the most becoming garb a man can dress in to a woman's eye, were she a hundred, and mine are not yet so dim as to be undazzled with its shine. Send me Cowper and *Zeluco*. Above all, write with them, and tell how you are, and how you found all at home, and if you broke my cup[6] in carrying. I hope not, lest it should be ominous. Yet I flatter myself your friendship is not brittle, but may last with your life; for Mrs. Burns's sake and your own I hope so shall your love. Adieu.—Yours,

F. A. D.

(1) Probably Mrs. Dunlop, by making play, somehow or other, with this "extempore" of hers, had exacted a promise from Burns to lengthen his visit by a day.

(2) A reference to the cold bath in Mrs. Dunlop's letter of 16th March, *infra*, suggests that Burns, who did not deny "occasional hard drinking," was at this time suffering from the nervous complaint of his youth, which he was wont to treat by a plunge into a barrel of water at his bedside.

(3) Mrs. Henri's servants, returning to Britain after their mistress's death.

(4) An epic poem in blank verse and nine books, by Richard Glover (1712-85), merchant, poet, dramatist, politician.

(5) An allusion to the Jacobite jape that George the First, the Elector of Hanover, was a kind of bonnet laird in Germany, as it was expressed in the lyric "The Wee, Wee German Lairdie"—

> Wha the deil hae we got for a king
> But a wee, wee German lairdie?
> An' when we gaed to bring him hame
> He was delving in his kail-yairdie.

(6) Mrs. Dunlop gave Burns a cocoa-nut cup which was an heirloom in her family; it is afterwards referred to as the Wallace Cup.

Burns no sooner reached home from Ayrshire than he was thrown into a flurry, by an intimation that he was about to incur the censure of the Board of Excise on account of his political opinions. What he had done or said it is impossible to tell. He had certainly subscribed to the Edinburgh

Gazetteer, the reform paper, the mere reading of which was enough, in the nervous state of the official mind, to cause him to be suspect, now that the people were reading Paine, and the progress of events in France was exciting a sympathetic agitation in England and Scotland. It is commonly believed, moreover, that Burns did not wear the placeman's gag so carefully as he led Mrs. Dunlop to believe in his letter of the 6th. He wrote a moving appeal to Mr. Graham of Fintry, and afterwards declared that Graham saved him from dismissal. There is, however, in the records of the Excise no mention of even a reprimand being administered to the poet. Anyhow, the storm soon blew over. Burns's supervisor and friend was certain that only a slight hint of the Board's disapprobation was given him.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Dec. 31, 1792.

Dear Madam—A hurry of business, thrown in heaps by my absence, has until now prevented my returning my grateful acknowledgements to the good family of Dunlop, and you in particular, for that hospitable kindness which rendered the four days I spent under that genial roof four of the pleasantest I ever enjoyed. Alas, my dearest friend! how few and fleeting are those things we call pleasures! On my road to Ayrshire, I spent a night with a friend whom I much valued—a man whose days promised to be many; and on Saturday last we laid him in the dust!

Jan. 2, 1793.

I have just received yours of the 30th, and feel much for your situation. However, I heartily rejoice in your prospect of recovery from that vile jaundice. As to myself, I am better, though not quite free of my complaint. You must not think, as you seem to insinuate, that in my way of life I want exercise. Of that I have enough; but occasional hard drinking is the devil to me. Against this I have again and again bent my resolution, and have greatly succeeded. Taverns I have totally abandoned; it is the private parties in the family way, among the hard-drinking gentlemen of this country, that do me the mischief—but even this I have more than half given over.

Mr. Corbet can be of little service to me at present; at least I should be shy of applying. I cannot possibly be settled as a

supervisor for several years.[1] I must wait the rotation of the list, and there are twenty names before mine. I might indeed get a job of officiating, where a settled supervisor was ill or aged; but that hauls me from my family, as I could not remove them on such an uncertainty. Besides, some envious, malicious devil has raised a little demur on my political principles, and I wish to let that matter settle before I offer myself too much in the eye of my supervisors. I have set, henceforth, a seal on my lips as to these unlucky politics; but to you I must breathe my sentiments. In this, as in every thing else, I shall show the undisguised emotions of my soul. War I deprecate; misery and ruin to thousands are in the blast that announces the destructive demon. But . . .

5th January 1793.

You see my hurried life, Madam: I can only command starts of time: however, I am glad of one thing; since I finished the other sheet, the political blast that threatened my welfare is overblown. I have corresponded with Commissioner Graham, for the board had made me the subject of their animadversions; and now I have the pleasure of informing you that all is set to rights in that quarter. Now as to these informers, may the devil be let loose to—but hold! I was praying most fervently in my last sheet, and I must not so soon fall a-swearing in this.

Alas! how little do the wantonly or idly officious think what mischief they do by their malicious insinuations, indirect impertinence or thoughtless blabbings! What a difference there is in intrinsic worth, candour, benevolence, generosity, kindness—in all the charities and all the virtues, between one class of human beings and another! For instance, the amiable circle I so lately mixed with in the hospitable hall of Dunlop, their generous hearts—their uncontaminated, dignified minds—their informed and polished understandings—what a contrast when compared—if such comparing were not downright sacrilege — with the soul of the miscreant who can deliberately plot the destruction of an honest man that never offended him; and with a grin of satisfaction see the unfortunate being, his faithful wife and prattling innocents, turned over to beggary and ruin!

Your cup, my dear Madam, arrived safe. I had two worthy fellows dining with me the other day, when I, with great formality, produced my whigmeleerie [fantastic] cup, and told them that it had been a family-piece among the descendants of Sir William Wallace. This roused such an enthusiasm that they insisted on bumpering the punch round in it; and, by and by, never did your

great ancestor lay a *Suthron* more completely to rest than for a time did your cup my two friends.[2] Apropos, this is the season of wishing. May God bless you, my dear friend, and bless me, the humblest and sincerest of your friends, by granting you yet many returns of the season! May all good things attend you and yours, wherever they are scattered over the earth! R. B.

(1) Burns had of course at one time looked for more rapid promotion.

(2) Tradition identifies this carouse with an all-night sitting, in which the Rev. Mr. M'Morine, of Caerlaverock, surprised the poet on entering, in the forenoon, by appointment, to baptise little Elizabeth.

Ad. Mr. Robt. Burns, Excise Officer,
Port Division, Dumfries.

Dunlop, 16*th March* 1793.

Dr. Burns—It seems to me like half a century since I wrot you last. Many a time since have I laid the paper before me for that purpose, and put it by again without once dipping the pen in ink; which may be one instance added to many of the useless pride of prudent resolve, that noblest prop of man of which I have seen you, my friend, sometimes make boast, and sometimes too, I doubt, deceive yourself as well as me. The truth, however, is that reason telling me all our correspondences and even our friendships ought to be turned to mutual advantage and improvement, just as I was sealing the last letter I sent you, it came in my head how I should make the pleasure I always have in writing you a spur to that duty which often in vain calls on me to write others. Now, says I to myself, I have seven letters to write which I am wholly ashamed to think I have omitted for an inexcusable tract of weeks past, and which may, for ought I know, hang on as many still more unheeded, in defiance of justice, humanity, gratitude, and every motive that ought to guide inclination and banish procrastination. But I here solemnly promise to myself I will not again lift the pen to Burns till at least five of those prior claims are satisfied, and this I made myself certain would send them all to post that week. Yet in this I find I counted still without mine host, and have taken, spite of even this irresistible impetus, more considerably than a week to each. Now, praise be thanked! they are dispatched, and were I to record to you, my good friend, the business some of them contained, you would

despise me for being capable of an hour's delay in doing what I ought to have thankfully embraced the very first possible moment for attempting, instead of preferring even the self-indulging hope of drawing a few lines more from you, in which too there were no few chances I might after all be disappointed, since your writing is but a very uncertain consequence of mine, and depends on something in a poet perhaps as indefinable as what you might possibly denominate caprice in a lady, and of which you may frequently, in the course of our now long acquaintance, have suspected my being in some degree susceptible, although it has never for one minute influenced the esteem which I have from the beginning had for your talents, and which years teach me more and more to transfer to your heart and understanding, to both which I give the preference to almost all my other acquaintances now in existence. Yet, don't imagine I mean to compliment you with absolute infallibility in either. On the contrary, I, with the real candour of true friendship, will take all the freedom your kindness allows me, and venture to find fault in single instances with both. Those instances staring me in the face at this moment, I shall let them drop like blots from my pen, and think of them no more if I can help it. The one has vext me, as I feared its hurting one in whose happiness my heart takes a strong and constant interest, and whose feelings I know could not stand being torn with the rack of sensibility, tortured by remorse for injuring those whom duty and affection equally prompted his protecting, even at the expense of holding a perpetual bridle upon his tongue, and even extending the restraint to his pen. 'Tis not enough, my dr. Sir, never to write improperly but to one; that one cannot wish you as well as I do and encourage it. Believe me, I would rather in the present state of things forswear that intercourse which at present forms one of the most delightful pleasures of my life, and for the loss of which I know nothing that could promise an adequate compensation, than have the pain of reflecting that it was my allowing or leading the way to an impropriety of expression that misled a friend into an inadvertent error which they might never be able to set to rights. I trembled when I read in a letter from Adair the other day to one of my girls, "Do you hear anything lately of B——s? We have a vile report in town that he is dismist for some political nonsense. I hope it is not true; it was talked to be in a letter that was stopt at the post office."[1] I ventured to assert this was a lie, as I trust it is, and shall ever remain; so a truce to the subject till better times. The other fault I found with you recoils upon myself.

Methinks I hear you ask me with an air that made me feel as I had got a slap in the face, if you must read all the few lines I had pointed out to your notice in poor Jenny's book. How did I upbraid my own conceited folly at that instant that had ever subjected one of mine to so haughty an imperious critic! I never liked so little in my life as at that moment the man whom at all others I delighted to honour, whom I revered myself, and was pleased and proud to point out in every circumstance to the applause of those around me. I then felt for Mrs. Richmond [Jenny Little], for you, and for myself, and not one of the sensations were such as I would wish to cherish in remembrance. But I was unhappy at that time, and perhaps given to be captious for that reason alone; if so, forgive it in pity of the cause which you will e'er long be acquainted with, and which still keeps me uneasie, though not in the degree it then did, since I have more hope of sharing in the happiness of the visit, should you make a summer excursion next month to this side of the country, or rather in May or June, as you used formerly to do, when I may perhaps be able to laugh over what is yet a too serious distress of which I am not at liberty to speak, although it employs all my thoughts. Yet you, instead of pitying, will envy me when I tell you I to-morrow expect to see here the divine Lesley Baillie and her father and sister Grace. As I really like her, I hope her smile will banish care. The Major [Andrew Dunlop] is gone to London to proffer his services as a soldier in any rank and without fee or reward, which I think poetically heroic. Did I ever tell you that your friend Adair was my cousin, and had it not been for you might have been still a nearer friend.[2] 'Tis strange how things come about in this world, and what means Providence employs to forward or frustrate our fortunes or our wishes. I should once have thought it impossible you should have been jostled in the way of mine. Yet so it has turned out in more instances than one, and all as far out of the reach of foresight as this, which I dare say you cannot even guess now when it is past. Why don't you send me the volume of Cowper? I expect daily two of yourself[3] from Edr. But what I value more than all the products of the press is one manuscript sheet from the author to, Dr. Burns, your sincere friend and obliged humble sert.,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

How does the cold bath suit this weather? We are in snow here. Adieu.

(1) A mere echo of the alarm which Burns felt in December, and which was so soon dissipated.

(2) The suggestion obviously is that Adair might have married one of the Misses Dunlop had Burns not introduced him to Charlotte Hamilton at Harvieston.

The following fragment is all that remains of the letter to which Mrs. Dunlop refers in that which follows. It has a certain importance in so far as it fixes to a month or so the date, hitherto unknown, of the composition of the Cardoness epitaph and the epigram on Miss Davies.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House, Stewarton.

[*June*, 1793.]

I sent you a great while ago, a parcel of books, which I hope came safe to hand; and that they found my much respected friend in health and spirits, and have afforded her some entertainment. I have been doing little in my rhyming trade of a long while.[1] The following is an epigram which I made the other day on a stupid, money-loving dunderpate of a Galloway laird—Maxwell of Cardoness:—[2]

Bless Jes—s Ch——, O Cardoness,
With grateful, lifted eyes;
Who taught, that not the soul alone,
But body too shall rise.

For had he said, the soul alone
From death I will deliver:
Alas, alas, O Cardoness!
Then hadst thou lain forever!

Here follows another—

Extempore, on being asked why God had made Miss Davies[3] so little, and Mrs. S—— so big. Miss D——, you must know, is positively the least creature ever I saw, to be at the same time unexceptionably, and indeed uncommonly, handsome and beautiful; and besides has the felicity to be a peculiar favorite toast of mine. On the contrary, Mrs. S—— is a huge, bony, masculine cowp-carl, horse-godmother, he-termagant of a six-feet figure, who might have been bride to Og, king of Bashan; or Goliah of Gath.

EPIGRAM

Ask why God made the GEM so small,
And why so huge the Granite?
Because, God meant mankind should set
That higher value on it.

Though I think this last a pretty enough thought, yet I have been lately outdone by an humble acquaintance of mine, who is reckoned a very clever fellow among his fellow-tanners; for that is his trade. I do not remember to have heard any thing of a good while that has pleased me so much.

EPIGRAM

Silence in love shows deeper woe
Than words tho' e'er so witty:
A beggar that is dumb, you know,
Deserves the greater pity.

I shall be too late for the post. Adieu! R. B.

(1) He was nevertheless working regularly for Thomson's publication, and corresponding with the editor.

(2) David Maxwell of Cardoness, the subject also of an epigram, and mentioned in the second Heron election ballad, was made a baronet in 1804, and died in 1825.

(3) Deborah Davies, a petite Englishwoman, friend of the Riddels of Glenriddel; the subject also of "Lovely Davies" and "The bonie wee thing." Allan Cunningham declared that the other lady was an Hon. Mrs. Stewart.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Excise Officer,
Port Division, Dumfries.

DUNLOP, *25th June* 1793.

My Dr. Burns—How little do we know ourselves! I am sure I would not have believed had it been written in the Gospel of truth itself that I should have been so long without your having the trouble of paying for one letter from me, and that I should be now actually more than a week of acknowledging the receipt of your last, which furnished me with the sweet conviction that you were really wishing to hear from me, and had been looking back with half a kind of regret to the unusual length of my silence, for the first part of which I shall not now try to account further than just to assure you it was not confined to yourself, but extended to every one of my friends, and was what I really could not help. It would give me more pleasure than I know how to express if I could persuade myself that you had felt the twentieth part of the chagrine at it that I did. Nay, however ungenerous you may think the confession, I must do the justice to truth to declare I should be the more happy the more I could flatter

myself that you had for once felt uneasie on my account, since I am fully conscious I had no intention to trifle with the sacred name of friendship which you have encouraged me to assume, and which I would not resign for any title the Royal George has to bestow, since not the well-won renown of my ancestors has ever ministered more faithfully to my pride, or added more to my consequence in my own eyes, than the distinction with which you have honoured me, and to which I am not weak enough to fancy I have any other right than my estimating them at their whole value. You say you had sent me books ; they are not yet arrived, nor do I know where I should enquire for them. Be so good as tell me by what conveyance I ought to have had them, and what they were. I should be vext to lose any thing that ever had been yours, and that was a proof of your remembrance of one whose existence is lightened under every cross accident of life by the satisfaction of reading your works and believing she possesses a place in your esteem. Indeed, there are moments when it seems almost my only remaining consolation, notwithstanding all the advantages and blessings which you, my friend, as well as myself and the world see heaped up around me. But alas ! how oft does my ungrateful soul exclaim in bitterness of spirit "*Nulle rose sans épingle.*" Yet I have surely found one in the rose of Mossgiel that has never yet scratched me, although my chosen bouquet for now six years—a long probation for the best of our race, and much too long for any flower but the Moss rose of the West, or the beauteous evergreen that decked the fair head of Coila, to bloom with unfading freshness and please still more than at the beginning. By the by, all here is just now in blooming beauty. I wish you were here to behold, sing and add to the charms of the place those of brilliant wit and unexhaustible fancy. Yet I retract, for to me at this moment your company would be the torture of Tantalus, for I have not heard a syllable this five or six days. But, my dr. Burns, I have all the poetic joy of imagination. I look daily for my son John and his wife and Mr. and Mrs. Vans and their eldest daughter. Perhaps their presence may dispel my deafness. Should it not, I have your new edition,[1] in which let me thank you a thousand times for the erasure of a word. A dash of your pen over *unhappy*, made at my request, is a compliment that made my heart bound with exultation, while another proof of friendly attention excited at once my gratitude and tears. Alas ! the sweet little bud is perhaps e'er now forever blasted and shrouded in earth with my poor Susan, far from his father and his native soil. Why does this accursed and accursing

war keep me a stranger to his fate who, I much fear, already may live only in your lays? But let me share my joys with you, the kind friend who shared and soothed my sorrows. I have lately had an enjoyment too exquisite for concealment—a letter from my dear Anthony, who is doing equal to my wishes, and beyond my hopes. He is kindness and generosity personified. Were I to write a poem, he should be my hero. I ought to bless my Creator on my bended knees every day for having brought me into the world to be the mother of this boy. Don't you, who are a father, feel that this is the true language of the heart? I am sure you do, or you could never be a poet. Yet I think you are sometimes, my friend, mistaken, or pretend to be so. I am reading the letters of Voltaire and the Great Frederic, which you call fulsome flattery, whereas I think I read the hearts of both, the keen fire of the soul, the enthusiasm of youth, the ardor of unbridled passion and unresisted sway. With what cruelty does the Prince mix his kindness, and with what tender affection and a degree of nobleness does the old man overlook and forgive it, though the wound bleeds inwardly till his last breath. No book ever gave me such a lesson of the bearing and forbearing necessary between friends while they inhabit this lower world, where even friendship, our purest, our most celestial delight, even in those enviable, admirable characters, can be converted into vanity and vexation of spirit. What then must such poor mortals as we two look for from one another. But pardon me, thou last of the Bards, who, exalted on the lofty Snowdon, shone forth a guiding light to the people, if I have dared to class myself with thee. Love, we are told, levels all mankind. Ought not friendship, his sister, to share his priviledges, and permit me to aspire to a fellowship with him whom I dare not in the sincerity of my heart praise, since he has told me the flow of nature and fervent approbation is fulsome in his ears, whose constant lot it has been to draw it from every unbiased mind and feeling heart? I have been reading Dugald Stewart's book[2] too, three volumes of a description of the Alps and glaciers of Savoy, and sewing a bed-mantle, not the winding-sheet of Laertes, but for a marriage present to one who ought not to marry, but one I pray Heaven to bless in every wish and every action of life. I have been visiting your flame, the divine Miss L. Baillie, who is said to have lighted the expiring lamp of life, if not of love, in the heart of a young officer lately come sick from India. He appears a very clever lad, and is a son of John Fowler, whom you must have heard of. We had much talk of you: here I still am, and

shall for some time remain. I hope to see you again, but whether or not can never, I hope, be removed to a place or state where I will not remember you with admiration, esteem and sincere friendship. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

I expect John Moore's Journal[3] to-morrow. Have you read it?

(1) The second Edinburgh edition of the poems was ready on 18th February 1793. In this edition "great, un happy Wallace heart" in "The Cotter's Saturday Night" was replaced by "Wallace's undaunted heart," and the verses "On the Birth of a Posthumous Child" (Mrs. Henri's) were inserted.

(2) Perhaps a book lent by Dugald Stewart. No work of the kind mentioned is known to have been written by him.

(3) *Journal during a Residence in France.* By [Dr.] John Moore, 2 vols., 1793.

Burns was busy all this year composing and furbishing up songs for George Thomson's *Scottish Airs*. War had broken out in February between Great Britain and France, with the result that at once political feeling was exacerbated and trade was depressed. Burns's heart was true to the Republic, and the slackness of trade which Pitt's policy brought about touched his pocket. When he wrote the song inclosed in the following fragment, he told Thomson on 25th June he felt his "bosom ready to burst with indignation on reading or seeing how these mighty villains divide kingdom against kingdom, desolate provinces, and lay nations waste, out of the wantonness of ambition, or often from still more ignoble passions."

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House, Stewarton.

I mentioned to you a grand publication of Scots songs, going on just now at London,[1] where I have the honor (indeed it is all I have by it) of revising and composing the Scots Songs. The following are verses I intend for the sweet plaintive air, "Logan-water."

A SONG.[2] *Tune*—"Logan Water."

O Logan, sweetly didst thou glide,
The day I was my Willie's bride;
And years sinsyne hae o'er us run, since

Like Logan to the simmer sun—
But now thy flowery banks appear
Like drumlie Winter, dark and drear, dirty
While my dear lad maun face his faes, must
Far, far frae me and Logan braes.

Again the merry month o' May
Has made our hills and vallies gay;
The birds rejoice in leafy bowers,
The bees hum round the breathing flowers:
Blythe, Morning lifts his rosy eye,
And Evening's tears are tears o' joy:
My soul, delightless, a' surveys,
While Willie's far frae Logan braes.

Within yon milkwhite hawthorn bush,
Amang her nestlings sits the thrush;
Her faithfu' Mate to share her toil,
Or wi' his song her cares beguile:
But I, wi' my sweet nurslings here,
Nae Mate to help, nae Mate to cheer,
Pass widowed nights and joyless days,
While Willie's far frae Logan braes.

O wae upon you, Men of State,
That Brethren rouse in deadly hate!
As ye make mony a fond heart mourn,
Sae may it on your heads return!
Ye mind na, 'mid your cruel joys,
The widow's tears, the orphan's cries:
But soon may Peace bring happy days
And Willie hame to Logan braes.

I have lately written two, or three ballads for the forementioned Collection, which I will send you some other opportunity. Adieu. R. BURNS.

(1) Thomson's *Scottish Airs* was "printed and sold by Preston and Sons, at their wholesale warehouses, No. 97 Strand, for the proprietor."

(2) This song was sent to Thomson in a letter of 25th June 1795, and was published in Thomson's third volume, 1801.

Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Officer of Excise,
Port Division, Dumfries.

DUNLOP, *6th August.*
(The month in which you used to write oftenest; let it still be my harvest.)

Dr. Burns—It is a charming morning, just six o'clock, and I have parted with friends who had passed a week here. I don't

use the word as it is commonly applied to people you hardly know, but to a lady whose grandfather was the intimate companion of my grandfather, whose family has been in habits of mutual intercourse with mine ever since, who spent her infancy and youth in part under my eye, and who now brought her son and two daughters to cement the friendships of the young folks of the fifth generation, without, as far as I know, a moment's interval of dryness or offence on either side. Were you not the very arch-poet of the age, I do not think you would have imagination to suggest the pleasure I had in this visit, notwithstanding how very deaf I still continue to be. Yet the looks of satisfaction I saw in every face around me, and the approbation I felt so justly due to the children of a mother for whom my esteem and affection had always kept equal pace through the whole journey of life, gave a satisfaction which I have not words to express, but in which I please myself with believing she sincerely shared; for she has the enviable happiness of seeing with a mother's exultation of heart the universally acknowledged merit of dutiful, beautiful, and singularly accomplished children, who seem to love her with a friendly as well as filial affection. I, instead of returning to the house, went up the waterside to prolong by silent reflection the scene which I had just lost, and which was made still more touching from particular circumstances, one of which was that the young man had been the confidant and friend of poor Mrs. Henri, the chosen witness of her marriage, and so much struck with the subsequent events as never since to have ventured into a place where he had the probability of meeting me, so that this, like most pleasures I have ever enjoyed, had its full tint of melancholy. While they were here I heard of the dr. little infant, and beyond my hopes he was well—intelligence, I believe, wholly owing to his grandfather's being gone to Switzerland, whence letters are allowed to pass, but hardly from France. What a melancholy thing is it to think what a succession of guilt and misery has been attendant on the emancipation of that unhappy country! We are commanded to pray for our enemies, and I am sure I sincerely pray they were converted into our friends, and not alone for private interest, but for that of my country and of suffering humanity. Mr. and Mrs. Vans and their daughter and John and his wife are gone east, but the first party I expect to return this day, accompanied with a sister of Mr. Vans's and her daughter. Yet on what accidents do our satisfactions depend! No one of the whole happen to have a voice suited to my ear, and except that I am sometimes able to distinguish a word from Vans himself, I might

as well be at London for all the rest; so that instead of joy I feel their visit cruelly tantalizing. They are to be in your side of the world, and I am to give them a letter of introduction to you. Yet I can hardly guess on what score this is asked, whether as a compliment to me, a piece of curiosity to see the learned pig, or vanity to *know*, at least be able to *speak of* what so many really admire; for I must warn you beforehand that not one of the party cares a snuff for that dr. feature, *to use your own expression*, in your character which first recommended you to a descendant of Sir W—— W——, and without which all the rest would in a great measure want, as the Royal George says, the *fion* (*Fr.* = finishing touch) at least in my eyes, nor can I believe any one blind to the beauty of that charming varnish can value as they ought those *chefs d'ouvres* of their Maker's, on whom he has been pleased to bestow his last and highest polish. Yet Vans is a worthy man, and the ladies do not want wherewithal to speak; so that should you be in the way, I don't believe you would grudge the time you spent with them. Their stay in Scotland at present will not be long, nor can I say if they will do more than visit it in summer for some time; still I rather think not. Not a word yet of the books you sent, although I have made numberless inquiries. I sent on purpose your song to the Lovely Lesley, whom you may also happen to see again one of these days, as I am sure she will much regret it should she miss you on her return, since, as she wrot me, a sight of the Bard was the first and greatest happiness she expected to draw from her journey. In her you meet a true admirer, which I assure you she also does in me; but alas! my admiration signifys little to either a beauty or a poet. Yet I should be unconsolable if either she or you thought so, and permitted me to guess at an opinion so humiliating and vexatious for one who sets more value on your esteem, and would be more pleased with an opportunity of promoting your happiness than I can tell, or than perhaps either the one or the other would take my word for it I could. She has found a friend in England. I wish you had his fellow at Dumfries. He franks her letters, and allows me to put mine for her under his cover. Now were he with you, I should only put him to half duty, for paying for yours is the only time I am sensible of the worth of money, by the joy it is able to procure me. But I truly grudge that you should be obliged to buy mine, since I dare not hope you find them such a pennyworth. Yet they are a very scarce commodity, if that can increase the price. The only letter I have wrote since my last to you has been to your

fair favourite, to whom, if you can remember an old woman in the company of so engaging a young one, I beg you may make kind mention of, Dr. Burns, your gratefully obliged friend and humble ser., FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House, Stewarton.

August 25th, 1793.
[Franked by P. Miller.[1]]

I have got a Frank for you, my dear Madam, but I have unfortunately miscalculated the time. The post goes in ten minutes, so, to fill up my paper to the decent length of a letter, in such a moment of time, I shall write you a song which I composed the other day. It is to an old air called "Allan Water," a river in Perthshire.

SONG[2]

By Allan-side I chanc'd to rove,
While Phebus sank beyond Benledi; A high mountain
The winds were whispering thro' the grove, to the west of
The yellow corn was waving ready: Strathallan.
I listen'd to a lover's sang,
And thought on youthfu' pleasures mony,
And ay the wild-wood echoes rang,
O dearly do I lo'e thee, Annie.

O happy be the woodbine bower,
Nae nightly bogle make it eerie;
Nor ever sorrow stain the hour,
The place and time I met my Dearie!
Her head upon my throbbing breast,
She, sinking, said—"I'm thine for ever!"
While mony a kiss the seal imprest,
The sacred vow, we ne'er should sever.

The haunt o' Spring's the primrose brae,
The Simmer joys the flocks to follow;
How cheary, thro' her short'ning day,
Is Autumn in her weeds o' yellow:
But can they melt the glowing heart,
Or chain the soul in speechless pleasure,
Or thro' each nerve the rapture dart,
Like meeting HER, our bosom's treasure.

Are you, Madam, acquainted with any of the principal people concerned in this new Royal Bank[3] about to be established in Glasgow? I am sure the Major will know them all. Alas, too

well do I know the up-hill business of asking a favor! But an uncommonly clever worthy young fellow, an intimate friend of mine, would wish a Clerk's place in it; and if you could any way serve him in that view, I would *indeed* esteem it as a high personal favour. His name is, John Drummond; a native of Crieff: was bred four years a Clerk in a Banking-house (I forget its name) in Stirling; and has been now two years in the same capacity in a branch of the Paisley Bank here in Dumfries. That branch is giving up, which is the reason of his being out of employ; and in these accursed times, employ is not easily found. The Cashier of the Paisley Union bank can give his character. Indeed, Recommendation in the strongest terms, he can have from all his former Employers; and *Pecuniary* security he can furnish to *any amount.* Permit me to tax your most strenuous efforts. Adieu! ROBT. BURNS.

(1) Captain Patrick Miller, son of Burns's landlord at Ellisland, and now M.P. for the Dumfries Burghs.

(2) Published in Thomson's second volume. In the *Centenary* edition, by the way, Burns's marginal note to Benledi is curiously misquoted thus:—"A mountain to the north of Stirling"; and the poet is censured for his faulty geography. What Burns wrote on the margin of the MS. was, as we have quoted, "A high mountain to the west of Strathallan"; and on the showing of the editors of the *Centenary* themselves, that is good geography.

(3) The attempt to establish a Royal Bank in Glasgow in August 1793 failed.

Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Officer of Excise,
Port Division, Dumfries.

GLASGOW, 10*th Sept.* 1793.

I had, my dr. Sir, yours on Monday last, on which day I also had your books, but not in the box as they were sent; so I know not if any writing but the flattering, kind address on the blank leaf accompanyed this welcome tribute of your much-valued friendship. Just then Mr. and Mrs. Vans were bidding me farewell, perhaps for the last time, as they are not to be in Scotland again for probably two years, and two years is a long, long while when one reaches my age, and, what is far worse, the *nota benes* that my spectacles, hearing-trumpet, gray hairs, etc., etc., etc., convey of the rapid devastation attendant on their

course. But no help for all this; what cannot be cured must be endured; and I will not trouble my friend with unavailing complaint. Let me rather thank that interesting intercourse which, like the evening breeze, fans the falling leaf while it yet quivers in the blast, and gives an active animation to its withering existence. Yes, dr. Burns, when I hear from Mr. Moore or you, I cannot express the feeling with which I read your letters, and tell my heart you are my friends and believe me yours; that this belief gives you pleasure, and you honour with your regard her who forgets that world by which she has long been forgotten. Imagination, in a transport of gratitude, kisses those hands which, softly inclining the hour-glass, make my last ebbing sands of life run smooth, and half baffle the shocks of sickness, sorrow, deafness, and disappointment, to which my nature is peculiarly suited to become a daily prey. Yet I hope I am truly sensible and grateful for the estimable blessings that still crown my days. Vans's visit has afforded me substantial delight. The foibles of his character are wore out, and its good qualities matured; his affairs comfortably settled, and his children educated with a plainness and symplicity that charms me the more perhaps the less I had laid my account with its being conducted in so moderate a channel, whereas I feared an overflowing tide of foreign follies and magnificent ideas would have borne away the remembrance of what the domestic happiness of a large family in poor Scotland requires. But this, like many of the occurrences of this world, shews me I have not the second sight, and ought to acquiesce when some things cross my hopes, since what is so material has so far exceeded them. That family will pass Dumfries in about a fortnight hence, when, if you should meet them, you will see in him more good-natured dispositions and a more generous heart than falls to the share of one man in a thousand. As for his wife and daughter, I will not commend them because they are my own, and because all the world do it for me, wherever they have wandered over its surface, as well as the friends at home, by whom they are universally beloved. I left home for a few days, where their absence made too great a blank, and have been trying here to forget those remembrances of former farewells which the present too forcibly recalls, so that I have not yet even looked into Cowper. Your two little volumes [the Edinburgh (1793) Edition] I receive with the joy of beloved and familiar friends, and rejoice in hearing their reception from others. Mr. Moore writes me thus:—"What is become of Burns? He is the first poet in our island.

There is an infinity of genius in his 'Tam o' Shanter,' but I wish he would write English, that the whole nation might admire him as I do." But why am I so long in answering your letter, which gave me at once pain and pleasure? There is no man by whom I would like better to be rated above my value, but I dare not even for that prize deceive you. When you deign to ask a favour, I consider it as a mark of friendship that makes my heart dance, and feel reluctance in sinking your opinion of my consequence by telling you how very insignificant it is, not only in interest but even in point of information. I know not even who are the people principally concerned in this bank, nor can Andrew, who takes no part in it, tell me. At any rate, I know no men on earth with whom my word would weigh one grain in favours of a preference in the line of business you mention; else I had already attempted it for a person in whom I have a very particular concern, which I may hereafter explain to you, and which will convince you I can do nothing but mourn in secret my want of that influence which might benefit any thing you wished well to. Yet I could not rest quiet without making some effort, however weak, for your friend. I racked my brain to think how or where I should apply, and the only way could occur to my mind I have taken by writing to David Dale,[1] not that I believe "the wished-for end will not be denied," but only conscious that "while the busy means are plyed," they bring their own reward in the pleasure I experience when I attempt any thing agreeable to one I so sincerely esteem, and by whose regard I feel myself at once honoured and pleased in the highest degree. In doing this I fear I have only sacrificed a forlorn hope, that will fall to the ground without advantage, nor have I a second string to my bow, tho' this first is a very spider web. I can only say had it been the cable of a first-rate man-of-war, I would have tugged at it with all my force in your service. Yet so very small is my hope of success that I am glad you spoke not for yourself on this occasion; otherwise I should have been inconsolable under the refusal that I apprehend must await me; for indeed I have no right to look for any thing else unless, like the House of Commons of England, Mr. Dale should throw out my petition without a reading, nor even then would I have much room to remonstrate or accuse him of injustice. With Mr. Corbet I would fain persuade myself I may one day or other have more to say on a subject yet nearer my heart, but in which I wait your leave to move, in case I should contrive to do it mal-apropos, and hurt where I most desire to be of use, since

you formerly suggested a hazard I should never have dreamt of, but which I trust is now at an end. Meantime I endeavour to keep up my credit there as well as I can against the hour of cause, when, should I be able to be of use to justice and my country, by the promotion of one of her worthiest sons, I shall not regret seeing my sixty-fourth year, although obliged to carry my eyes in my pocket, and wear my ears hung at my belt, in which mortifying circumstances I still long for your seeing me, but yet more for my seeing you a Supervisor, or any thing that could make you more happy and at ease than you are, and that could be an agreeable remembrance of me when I could no longer plague you with my letters—a time I'm afraid not very distant, for even without my being removed to Heaven or to London I doubt my hand will soon lose its cunning, since already I write nobody but yourself, and that with a difficulty of which the reading possibly has often apprized you, the whiteness of the paper creating a giddiness in my head that often puts it out of my power to end the sentence I had begun, and throws confusion into my ideas as well as their expression. Have you any thoughts of being in our part of the world this season? Shall I ever again have it in my power to converse with freedom, and speak of things that hang heavie at my heart, and weigh it down too deep for utterance? My sole company is a book, and I have found one at present which I reckon a treasure. Why are not you Retif-de-la-Briton and me the Marchioness M.? How I envy her in spite of all her misfortunes, while I beguile the hours in reading the *Nuits de Paris*, and join Voltaire, Mercier, and the King of Prussia that he is the only original author in France. I think I know two in England (as our country is injuriously called) who lead me, like his *Élise*, to think an author is something superiour to the race of man. How happy then must I feel myself in being able to number both these Scotsmen and friends of, Dr. Sir, yours sincerely, FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Since writing the above I have been inquiring here, and am assured the bank is yet a very uncertain scheme, and will not at any rate be arranged sooner than a twelvemonth hence, when, like all polititians, they pretend they will dispose of the offices impartially to the best qualified upon an uninfluenced examination. I said this was all I could ask, only hoping that, Mr. Drummond being first on the list, *ceteris paribus*, should in justice claim a preference should a hundred candidates afterwards appear, which they alledged would be the case. Meanwhile he should miss

nothing good for any appearances I dare flatter myself with here, where I would hardly be surprised were the whole affair to vanish into smoke. At all events, I fear our interest is at best a poetic vision; at least if you don't know some far better support than any help I can afford. I send this to Mr. Kerr, and once more am now and ever, Dr. Sir, your much obliged and ever grateful humble sert.

Address for me at home, where I shall be in a few days.

(1) One of the best known names in the history of Glasgow. He was a yarn merchant; introduced cotton-spinning into Lanark and other places, and was concerned in many commercial and philanthropic schemes. He became a Congregationalist and a preacher.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

DUMFRIES, 15*th Dec.* 1793.[1]

My Dear Friend—As I am in a complete Decemberish humour, gloomy, sullen, stupid, as even the deity of Dulness could wish, I shall not drawl out a heavy letter with a number of heavier apologies for my late silence. Only one I shall mention, because I know you will sympathize in it; these four months, a sweet little girl,[2] my youngest child, has been so ill that every day, a week or less threatened to terminate her existence. There had much need be many pleasures attached to the state of husband and father, for God knows they have many peculiar cares. I cannot describe the anxious, sleepless hour these ties have frequently given me. I see a train of helpless little folks; me and my exertions all their stay; and on what a brittle thread does the life of man hang! If I am nipt off at the command of fate, even in all the vigour of manhood as I am—such things happen every day—gracious God! what would become of my little flock! 'Tis here that I envy your people of fortune. A father on his death-bed, taking an everlasting farewell of his children, has indeed woe enough; but the man of competent fortune leaves his sons and daughters independency and friends; while I—but I shall run distracted if I think any longer on the subject!

To leave off talking of the matter so gravely, I shall sing with the old Scots ballad:—

O that I had ne'er been married,
I would never had nae care;
Now, I've gotten a wife and weans,
And they cry "crowdie" evermair:

Crowdie ance, crowdie twice,
Crowdie three times in a day;
An' ye crowdie ony mair
Ye'll crowdie a' my meal away.

December 24th.

We have had a brilliant theatre here, this season; only, as all other business has, it experiences a stagnation of trade from the epidemical complaint of the country—*want of cash.* I mention our theatre merely to lug in an occasional "Address" which I wrote for the benefit night of one of the actresses, which is as follows:

ADDRESS

SPOKEN BY MISS FONTENELLE ON HER BENEFIT NIGHT, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4TH, 1793, AT THE THEATRE, DIMFRIES

Still anxious to secure your partial favor,
And not less anxious sure this night than ever,
A Prologue, Epilogue, or some such matter,
'Twould vamp my bill, said I, if nothing better;
So, sought a Poet, roosted near the skies,
Told him, I came to feast my curious eyes;
Said, nothing like his works were ever printed;
And, last, my prologue-business slily hinted.
"Ma'am, let me tell you," quoth my man of rhymes,
"I know your bent—these are no laughing times:
Can you—but Miss, I own I have my fears,
Dissolve in pause and sentimental tears—
With laden sighs and solemn-rounded sentence;
Rouse from his sluggish slumbers, fell Repentance;
Paint Vengeance as he takes his horrid stand,
Waving on high the desolating brand,
Calling the storms to bear him o'er a guilty land!"

I could no more—askance the creature eyeing,
D'ye think, said I, this face was made for crying?
I'll laugh, that's poz—nay more, the world shall know it;
And so, your servant, gloomy Master Poet!
Firm as my creed, Sirs, 'tis my fix'd belief,
That Misery's another name for Grief:
I also think—so may I be a bride!
That so much laughter, so much life enjoy'd.
Thou man of crazy care and ceaseless sigh,
Still under bleak Misfortune's blasting eye;
Doom'd to that sorest task of man alive—
To make two guineas do the work of five:
Laugh in Misfortune's face—the beldam witch!
Say, you'll be merry, tho' you can't be rich.
Thou other man of care, the wretch in love,
Who long with jiltish arts and airs hast strove;

Who, as the boughs all temptingly project,
Measur'st in desperate thought—a rope—thy neck—
Or, where the beetling cliff o'erhangs the deep
Peerest to meditate the healing leap:
Wouldst thou be cur'd, thou silly, moping elf,
Laugh at her follies,—laugh e'en at thyself:
Learn to despise those frowns now so terrific,
And love a kinder—that's your grand specific.

To sum up all, be merry, I advise;
And as we're merry, may we still be wise.

25th, Christmas morning.

This, my much loved friend, is a morning of wishes: accept mine—so Heaven hear me as they are sincere! that blessings may attend your steps, and affliction know you not! In the charming words of my favourite author, *The Man of Feeling*, "May the great spirit bear up the weight of thy gray hairs; and blunt the arrow that brings them rest!"

Now that I talk of authors, how do you like Cowper? Is not the *Task* a glorious poem? The religion of the *Task*, bating a few scraps of Calvinistic divinity, is the religion of God and Nature; the religion that exalts, that ennobles man. Were you not to send me your *Zeluco* in return for mine? Tell me how you like my marks and notes through the book. I would not give a farthing for a book, unless I were at liberty to blot it with my criticisms.

I have lately collected, for a friend's perusal, all my letters;[3] I mean those which I first sketched, in a rough draught, and afterwards wrote out fair. On looking over some old musty papers, which from time to time, I had parcelled by, as trash that were scarce worth preserving, and which yet at the same time I did not care to destroy; I discovered many of these rude sketches, and have written, and am writing them out, in a bound MS. for my friend's library. As I wrote always to you the rhapsody of the moment, I cannot find a single scroll to you except one, about the commencement of our acquaintance. If there were any possible conveyance, I would send you a perusal of my book.

R. B.

(1) Published by Currie, 1800, with the misdate 1795.

(2) Elizabeth Riddell Burns; see p. 369.

(3) This was the Glenriddel MS., containing a number of unpublished poetical pieces, which Burns took so great pains

to recover after the death of Captain Riddel, for whom the book was compiled.

A letter of Mrs. Dunlop's is apparently missing here.

Ad. Mr. Robt. Burns, Officer of Excise,
Port Division, Dumfries.

Dunlop, 14*th Febry.* 1794.

Why, my good friend, have I not heard from you in reply to my last, or rather since? I had much rather it had been so. Why have I not seen you as I wished and hoped I should have done on the melting of the snows? Do you determine to treat me with rigid justice, and repay in kind my seemingly careless, long silence. If so, be still more just, and recollect the many, perhaps sometimes persecuting instances you have had of my indefatigable, persevering assiduity in writing when I could hardly expect your stretching patience the length of travelling over the whole epistle without now and then making a most tremendous leap in the weary journey. Yet your good-nature, politeness, or some still better cause, has always prevented your acknowledging any hardships to which you found the length of the way had exposed you; nor have you ever once indulged the vanity of a boast while exercising uncomplaining fortitude, to which our brave campaigners in Flanders are not able to attain, and for which I could not resist the pleasure of praising you with sincere delight would you only allow me to do it to your face; but for this you must, if you incline it, really catch time by the forelock, for I shall in a fortnight hence be gone to Edr. on my way to Morham, where Mrs. Dunlop is again ready to obey the first command given our first parents. I would not have gone to her at this bout but from a fall she has lately got, and the effects of which she still feels, I am rather more anxious about her than on former similar occasions, and unable to refuse her reiterated earnest requests to encourage her by my presence in the hour of trial. Fain would I augur from your silence that you mean to favour us with an annual look of the *Bard*, and, of what I value still more, if you can pardon one's thinking anything preferable in value, *the Friend*, a title I am proud of your permitting me to give you, and happy in believing your sentiments with regard to myself may fairly claim as your due. Yet I would have liked that you had, just if it had but been in a single line, said you kindly proposed what you knew would make me so happy, or not overlooked with supercilious neglect as not worth an answer the offer which,

however trifling in its produce, I meant as a kind one, of dedicating my work for a certain time to the benefit of my little godson, and in which I in pure earnest solicited your assistance. In return for my part in this proposal I had humbly presumed to hope you would have *brought* me a reading of that manuscript you were preparing to deck the library of some more deserving, more favoured, much envyed, but I am sure not more sincere friend than myself, when you would have taken the trouble of carrying a New-Year's gift I have kept by me since the first of Janry. for your little boy, from not knowing, as I mentioned before, how to send it safe, or liking to venture the loss of any thing meant for a child, lest his mother should have any of the superstition from which hardly any of our sex are free, where our favourite objects are concerned, and which ordinarily accompanys that sensibility of heart which, for your sake and the good of your family, as well as her own happiness, I wish your wife to possess, and in which the luster of her eyes does not allow me to believe her deficient. These were my thoughts. Can you disappoint the hopes and wishes of your friends, if it is in your power without very great inconvenience to do otherwise? I persuade myself you cannot. Don't force me to abjure this faith. I shall do it with too painful reluctance, more than I trust your humanity will dispose you to inflict. I have for your perusal Moore's *Journal*, where you will find a quotation from your "Tam o' Shanter" and that approbation the Dr. uniformly bestows upon the author. As it is a dear book, I presume you have not bought it. If you come here, I have a thousand things to ask and to tell. If you do not, I shall feel a suspicious fear that my questions may be but importunate, and my communications uninteresting, notwithstanding the numberless kindnesses that start up to my grateful remembrance to check such a thought and reproach me for such an expression as from you would have cut me to the heart. But you men are of stouter stuff. Besides, you know it is not in earnest, as when I assure you of that admiration, esteem, and real friendly regard with which I ever am sincerely yours, and in which I can bear no doubt. Adieu.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Dr. Burns, write whenever you get this if you would oblige me, were it but yes or no, as the song says, if it must be so.

The early part of this year was clouded for Burns by a return of his old complaint, hypochondria. He was comparatively idle so far as composition was concerned, and as

will be seen, Mrs. Dunlop found him equally lazy at correspondence. When he did answer her letters he took no notice of her reproaches and remonstrances, and it is possible that the extravagant length of some of her recent effusions had brought about the result she had long professed to dread —he did not read her letters carefully, if at all.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House, Stewarton.

Mar. 13th, 1794.
Readdressed to Moreham, near Haddington.

I would have written you, my dear Friend, immediately on receipt of yours, but from day to day I had a prospect of going to Ayrshire, when I would have had the very great pleasure of meeting you; but to-day I learn that all hopes of my west-country jaunt are cut off. This has mortified me extremely, as now I shall not have it in my power to see you God knows when. I shall indeed be in Ayrshire in summer, but then it is odds but you will be in the East-country.

Pray, were not your son, James, and your grandson, Wallace, along with Cornwallis at Seringapatam? I am just reading an exceedingly well written narrative of that campaign, done by a Major Dirom,[1] who was Adjutant-General there, and who has bought an estate and is now settling in this neighbourhood. The Major frequently mentions a Lieut. Wallace, whom I take to be your grandchild; and Lieutent. Agnew, who may possibly be a relation of yours. They, two, were aidecamps to Colnl. Maxwell. I have often wished to have sat by you, and have read the narrative to you. The circumstance of little Wallace being there, so near a relation of yours, and one in whom I know you are so much interested, made me all alive to the story. It was an admirable school for a young soldier.

How do you like the following verses, which I wrote the other day on a fantastical, fine-fashioned Dame of my acquaintance?

MONODY ON MARIA[2]

How cold is that breast now which Folly once fired,
How pale is that face where the rouge lately glistened!
How mute is that tongue which the echoes oft tired,
How dull is that ear which to Flattery so listened!

Loves, Graces and Virtues, I call not on you;
So shy, grave and distant, ye shed not a tear:
But come, all ye offspring of Folly so true,
And flowers let us cull for Maria's cold bier.

We'll search through the garden for each silly flower,
We'll search through the forest for each idle weed;
But chiefly the nettle, so typical, shower,
For none e'er approached her but rued the rash deed.

THE EPITAPH

Here lies, now a prey to insulting neglect,
Who once was a butterfly gay in life's beam;
Want only of Wisdom denied her respect,
Want only of goodness denied her esteem.

Voila un autre! In answer to one who affirmed of a well-known Character here, Dr. B——,[3] that there was falsehood in his very looks—

That there is FALSEHOOD in his looks,
I must and will deny;
They say, their Master is a KNAVE—
And sure they do not lie.

Yours ever, R. BURNS.

(1) *A Narrative of the Campaign in India which terminated the War with Tippoo Sultan in* 1792. By Alexander Dirom, 1793. Wallace was Mrs. Dunlop's grandson, "Sandie"; he was aide-de-camp to his uncle, Colonel Maxwell, the Duchess of Gordon's brother. See *antea*, pp. 343-345. Agnew may have been a relative of Mrs. Dunlop on the mother's side.

(2) The somewhat mysterious orgie at Woodley Park and the consequent breach with the Riddels, which gave occasion for this lampoon on Mrs. Walter, occurred in the early part of this year. This copy of the piece lacks verses 2 and 5.

(3) Dr. Babington, of whom nothing is known.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Dumfries.

[Franked by Kerr.]

I seize this opportunity of getting Mr. Kerr to frank this line. I got yours on coming to Morhame, and give you a thousand thanks for writing. Your remembrance is always a cordial to my wounded spirit, and I thankfully rejoice at sight of your hand, although you never answer one word I say to you. Indeed, I am still of opinion you do not read my letters. No matter, if you recollect me kindly without them; 'tis perhaps all I ought to expect, and more than I can pretend to deserve, unless you are the most grateful of mankind, and allow people a claim for that

esteem or admiration they cannot help giving you. Indeed, as far as that goes, I have a most extensive and constantly encreasing right, of which I cherish a hope after a seven years' trial that you will now never think of defrauding me. Every line I receive I consider as a promissory note, impowering me to draw deeper on your friendship, and should you never read mine, believe me I avenge the neglect by reading yours twenty times before I lay them by, and a hundred times after. They are my business when idle, my consolation when distrest or disappointed, and my companion when alone. But I am resolved you shall not throw this aside, for it shall positively contain something good to tempt your attention, if either prose or verse can command it. I call the Muses to my aid when the varied events of life unfit me for other society, and to their secretary I naturally commit the property with which at these moments they are pleased to entrust me. If its value is small that is not my fault, and he that is faithful in small matters may be depended upon in greater. I have been at Edr., where I have produced the following, the real effusions of the heart, on the double marriage of four of my friends. The one couple is my eldest daughter,[1] who, after three years' deliberation, gives her hand to one of the worthiest of men without a sixpence, and instantly leaves me, probably for ever, to go to London. This affair I have often hinted at before in writing you, and you must have seen how it wrings my soul between hopes and fears for their future situation. I am incredibly sorry I have not seen you just now, but will be much more so should you come to Ayrshire when I am away. But I pray you don't do that if you can help it. I shall endeavour to get back as soon as I can; yet I fear it may be midsummer at least before I make it out. Although I have oft entreated you in vain to come, may I not for once prevail on you to let it alone for a month or two till I get home again? I am sure you will not between and that time meet one friend to whom your presence will give equall not to say superiour pleasure. You have no curiosity; you don't even ask to whom I lent your love song, although I told you it had been a successful declaration. I send you my tract for education for the benefit of little Frank, and the epithalamium above mentioned on the other side, and ever am, sincerely yours,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

When Cupid with a double torch
Thus lights my friends to joy,
Shall pangs ungratefull rend my heart
With timid black annoy?

No, let me with a silent sigh
  Waft on their promised bliss,
Nor stain with one unhallow'd tear
  The kind connubial kiss.

Let sordid selfish narrow thoughts
  Withdraw their poison'd sting,
In concert with their mutual joy
  My widow'd heart shall sing.
. . . . . .

MORHAME, 21*st March* 1794.

(1) Agnes Eleanor. Her husband was Joseph Elias Perochon, a London merchant. See Introduction.

Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Officer of Excise,
Port Division, Dumfries.

MORHAME, 12*th May* 1794.

Dr. Burns—First when I knew you, or rather first when I wrot you before I knew you but in the poet's page, I had no occupation but writing you, and a most blessed one that was; for to it I believe I have been indebted for any little attention I have since been enabled to pay to the duties, the pleasures, or the business of life allotted to fill up that term of it between me and the grave—a void I am not now so very anxious as I then was to overleap. Time, with all its troubles, seems not so tedious, nor the world, with all its drawbacks, half so insipid as it then did, tho' God knows I can hardly enumerate the circumstances that have since occurred to endear existence much more to me, but could be at no loss to registrate a multitude of teasing vexatious ones that might have helped to put one out of conceit with themselves or those about them, in which number I shall for the present only quote your obstinate and unkind silence, which, although I had in part deserved it by having myself played something like the same ungracious part formerly, yet I feel it so grievously cruel when coming from you that it swims a-top of every other distressing recollection, and gets to my pen the moment I come to complain or muse upon what seems a just cause of complaint, overclouding my spirits. Put, then, dr. Sir, an end to this, and I shall try to get over the other grievances fate may afflict me with as well as I can without any seditious murmurings or self-tormenting discontent. But, indeed, I cannot feel truly happy deprived of those testimonies of your kind remembrance with which you used so frequently to favour me,

and upon which time only teaches me to set the more value the oftener I have occasion to compare with others, or to feel the blank their absence creates, since they have been withdrawn. Not all the attentions, not all the happiness or kindness of the family I am in, not the prattle of their five lovely infants, nor the seeming prosperity of all around me, tho' endeared by every proof they can bestow of regard and affection, can afford me that unmixed pleasure I used to taste under this roof when I had added to those the warm assurances of esteem and regard from a friend whom I believed incapable of flattery, and whose good-will I returned with too much sincerity myself to doubt of his. This is now the fifth[1] time I have wrote you since I have been able to draw one line in return. What have I done to deserve this? The only offence I have been guilty of that I know is the neglect of sending *Zeluco*, but I waited to have it bound, and to know how to get it conveyed. Could I think you were as much in earnest to send me the letters you once spoke of, and which I am sure I need not say how much I would delight in reading, it would be a hope that would cheer my very soul to look forward to. But, instead of this, I now almost despair of ever getting another line from you, nor guess to what I should impute the change, whether to my own insipidity or the unsteadiness of you men, among whom I dare say there are very few indeed that can boast of acknowledging the same friends seven years, which is now about the period since you allowed me the pride of reckoning my own name in the list of those you called your friends. Nay, I can show under your hand an address to your very dr. and much respected friend Mrs. Dunlop, which I cannot bear to think should ever be obliterated from your memory. I assure you it is with me indelibly inscribed on the living table of a grateful heart. But, setting this aside, you ought at least to tell me if you had two letters from me here, and one from Edr., franked by Mr. Kerr, containing a present for Francis the first, and another with accounts of the birth of Francis Wallace the second, who is a fine little boy, but not yet a Christian (1). If you are still alive and serve the king at Dumfries, write me. If you do not, I shall believe you are left the place, and deserted your post as well as your friend, and shall wear the willow for your sake, and a weeping one I do assure you it will be. Write me when you mean to go to Ayrshire. I have no time yet fixt for leaving this unless my son Andrew gets a command of Light Horse,[2] which I understand is in agitation. Farewell.—Believe me ever sincerely yours,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

John and his wife offer compts., tho' you are no longer brother farmers.

(1) Three letters from Mrs. Dunlop, of dates between 21st March and 12th May, are thus missing. Including the one in which she announced the birth of another Francis Wallace, presumably a child of Captain Dunlop's, and the other missing one noted at p. 397 *antea*, Mrs. Dunlop had actually written six letters since Burns's of the 15th December.

(2) Major Dunlop did raise and command the Ayrshire Fencible Cavalry.

Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Excise Officer,
Port Division, Dumfries.

June 12th, DUNLOP 1794.

Dr. Burns—Perhaps the intelligence is of little or no importance to you; yet it is pleasant to myself to acquaint you that I am once more in that land you once loved, and which gave birth to that fame which has blown you so far from us as perhaps to change the ideas of your mind farther than the spot of your residence. However, Ayrshire, should it be forgot by you, can never forget the honour you have done her in the world's eye, and in this respect I feel myself a member of my native county, and, independent of every future event, must with gratitude and pleasure remember the time when, spite of the heavy hand of misfortune pressing hard upon both my heart and consequence at the same moment, your Coila appeared drest in fancy's fairest flowers, and bid your friendship reach out a little finger to support me above the Slough of Dispond where I was ready to be sunk forever. The sweet perfume of her bouquet revived me, while perhaps the splendor that surrounded the assistant genie dazzled my imagination, and added supernatural influence to his presence and her charms. My spirits were exhilarated as if I had been intoxicated with lavender drops or chewing opium, and almost lost sight of the mournful scenes of real life to soar up to that sublime creation which seems the suitable abode of superior intelligences. But alas! my good friend, you, I dare say, as well as I know by woful experience that a trance does not last long. St. Paul was not long lifted up to the third Heaven when he must again descend to earth, return to all its overwhelming cares and sorrows, and so must I without your help, I dread, though with a feather you can for a time at least hold me above

them all whenever you please. Fight alone the best I can with that mire in which fate or folly forever plunges me, and from which I never expect to be fully extricated but by the exterminating angel, yet let your goose quill only scratch a line saying you will visit your native soil, now that you know I once more inhabit it, and have only delayed coming because I was absent; it would be good-nature, if not truth, to tell me so, and would keep me in good humour with myself and you for half a year to come, which you'll allow is a great while for a woman to be pleased or a man to deserve she should. What merit, then, may I not boast who have been almost seven years delighted with the little obliging kindnesses the Bard has honoured me with, and most sincerely grateful for the indulgence with which he has over-looked many seeming inconsistencies in my conduct, which I would be at a loss to account for to any body, but which still, my own conscience bears witness, were never occasioned by one moment's interval of that esteem his works and their author are in my opinion equally suited to inspire. True, you sometimes treat me with a degree of neglect which, though sensible I have deserved, I know not how to receive, and cannot resolve to return. However you may set me down in your own mind as the aggressor, I am wholly blameless, and now, as sincerely as ever, my Dr. Sir, yours, etc. etc., FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

CASTLE DOUGLAS, 25*th June* 1794.

Here in a solitary inn, in a solitary village, am I set by myself, to amuse my brooding fancy as I may. Solitary confinement, you know, is Howard's favorite idea of reclaiming sinners; so let me consider by what fatality it happens that I have so long been exceeding sinful as to neglect the correspondence of the most valued friend I have on earth. To tell you that I have been in poor health will not be excuse enough, though it is true. I am afraid that I am about to suffer for the follies of my youth. My medical friends threaten me with a flying gout; but I trust they are mistaken.

I am just going to trouble your critical patience with the first sketch of a stanza I have been framing as I paced along the road. The subject is LIBERTY. You know, my honored friend, how dear the theme is to me. I design it as an irregular Ode for General Washington's birthday. After having mentioned the degeneracy of other kingdoms, I come to Scotland thus:

Thee, Caledonia, thy wild heaths among,[1]
Thee, famed for martial deed and sacred song,
To thee I turn with swimming eyes!
Where is that soul of freedom fled?
Immingled with the mighty dead
Beneath that hallowed turf where WALLACE lies!

Hear it not, WALLACE, in thy bed of death!
Ye babbling winds, in silence sweep!
Disturb not ye the hero's sleep,
Nor give the coward secret breath!
Is this the power in freedom's war
That wont to bid the battle rage?

With the additions of—

Behold the eye which shot immortal hate
Crushing the despot's proudest bearing;
That arm which, nerved with thundering fate,
Braved usurpation's boldest daring!
One quenched in darkness, like the sinking star,
And one the palsied arm of tottering, powerless age.

You will probably have another scrawl from me in a stage or two. R. B.

(1) The "Ode to Liberty" or Ode for General Washington's Birthday is the complement of "A Vision," being the song of the minstrel of the latter poem. See the *Self-interpreting Edition* (Philadelphia, 1886).

Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Officer of Excise,
Port Division, Dumfries.

DUNLOP, *8th Sept.* 1794.

My dr. Burns — I received some time ago, after many devious paths through which it had wandered on its way from Castle Douglas since the 25th of June, a little line so very diminutive in its size that I thought it must have come from Oberon the fairy, when, to my utter confusion, I found it was in the handwriting of my good friend who in a solitary inn, where, however, I hope for the sake of the poet every thing was not as scarce as paper, had set out on self-examination, confession of his sins, and appointed to himself the grievous penance of writing to me, although he had not certainly added as a compensation the duty of fourfold restitution. The smallness of the peace-offering, however, indicated a strong conviction that the sacrifice was offered up to a being of infinite mercy and long-suffering, and accordingly it was accepted as a sweet-smelling savour; and I meant to have wrot you next day; but seldom, indeed, I follow

out my intentions, nor need I blush before you, who get a step beyond me in criminality, for you even overleap the bounds of your promise. Witness your flattering me even in that little line with the delusive prospect of hearing from you again in a stage or two. Alas! what long stages you travel by. They exhaust all my patience, and make me fear I shall be laid down to rest with my fathers before you arrive at the next penitential inn, from whence you mean sending me another confession, perhaps with as little amendment as the last. Yet if it was penance, it could not be too short. Should your next afford you pleasure, as I hope it will, be sure I at least will never think it too long. Now I dare say you are angry, and think this a strange, ungrateful way of receiving the beautiful verses you sent me. Shall I, however, confess the exordium offended me? I found something beneath you in the affected modesty of being afraid to tire *my* patience in reading any thing from *your* Muse, especially when I must believe you were conscious of more than common merit in the composition and enthusiastically fond of the theme. So was I once, but your goddess has behaved in such a way as to injure her reputation, and acquire so very bad a name, that I find it no longer fit to acknowledge my favour for her, since her company is not now profuse of bliss nor pregnant with delight; and she is too much attached of late to the society of butchers[1] to be admitted among ladies, or even named but by those who are greatly addicted to scandal and fond of directing its foul tongue against the fallen fair they have seen most honoured and esteemed, instead of letting her slip off unobserved and for a while forgotten till she can tye up her garter, bandage the ankle she had strained in a false step, or change her handkerchief spotted with the sanguine stains of the guillotine, and emerge from a temporary cloud in pristine glory. At present she is certainly raving in the crisis of a fever. May it not prove fatal, as I greatly fear it may to herself, as well as it already has to too many of her friends, to the shame and grief of all that remain. Now, as criticism is the feature in my character you seem to remember most—I love it more than ever for that very reason—I must indulge it, and as we generally by a critic mean only his false quarter or talent for finding fault, expect to hear every snake of envy hiss your irregular Ode, and without observing the inimitable force of description in the last line, dwell only on its not being rhyme with the one before it, which can only be accounted for by the place where it was wrote, which might so far derange the ideas as to make the author after dinner substitute the word *age* instead of

war. Indeed, there is room to believe this was the case, as there is a confusion in the images of the preceding lines of that stanza, which seem to dance cross partners, while the thundering arm *braves* and the eye-shot *crushes* their opponents, whereas, had the poet wrot in the forenoon, or not in a public-house, he probably might have assigned their offices differently, and might have also remembered his kind intent of writing me again. Had he thrown such a sop to Cerberus, there would not have been one whit of all this barking against the harmony of Orpheus, the strength of Hercules, and more than the beauties of Euridice. But let me drop poetry, and come to what I find a thousand times more interesting—your complaints, which, whether real or imaginary, I sincerely sympathise in; perhaps, indeed, most in the last supposition, which I therefore hope is not the true one. You see, indeed, I have believed yours a real ailment, since I treat it with the same regimen as when you were once said to be ill of a fever at Mauchline, and I sent such another doze of nonsense, only wrote on a greater number of sheets, and I flatter myself you were then much the better of it. I am sure I was, for you took it in very kind part, and from that time treated me with a degree of friendly notice from which I have often derived more pleasure than I can well express or you believe. Yet I hope, notwithstanding the very great self-complacency with which I read it under your hand, that mine was your most valued correspondence. You have many better and more valuable friends, though I am sure not one that wishes you better, esteems you more, or rejoices more sincerely in believing you make me some sort of return, and feel an inclination to estimate me at least at as much as any one else will allow me to be worth. When will you convince me of this by coming to see us here? Do it while you can. God knows how short the time may be. This world whirls strangely round; it may carry me with it. I thought long before now I should have been in London—a place from which my friends seldom return, and yet more seldom come the friends they went. Should you ever find this the case with me, only think I am like the rest of the world—a thing you are sure no body that knows a B from a Bull's foot will ever think of you. Even were you to whirl round from every friend you ever had on earth, and from me among the rest, I could not believe it for a moment, since memory must ever turn back to those thousand unrivalled peculiarities I have so long been accustomed to admire. Nay, 'tis not improbably to some of these peculiarities which distinguish my friend that I owe the partial kindness

which I so much value; for well I know your favour is not the silly wind that kisses all it meets, else I had never courted it as I have done, nor valued it as I trust I ever shall do. By the by, we had a story here that you had lost your office [2] and were gone to London. I should really have been very unhappy could I have believed for a moment there was a possibility of you shifting your quarters without telling me beforehand, but I never believe ill of those few it is my greatest happiness to love and esteem. What is become of your visit to Ayrshire? Had you not spoke so positively of it, I don't know if I should have quitted the East so soon as I did, for I was in a family I greatly liked, and much more pleased than I commonly am from home; but it was a great temptation to me to remove lest I should miss the pleasure of seeing you here—a thing I can so very seldom flatter myself with any chance for. Yet I hope the delay is not to amount to a total disappointment. Meantime, I beg to hear, not only how you are, but if your little girl is got strong, and how all the children are, and whether Mrs. Burns seems about to add to their number, and tell me as many particulars of them all as may play in my fancy while I sit tying knots, forgetting and forgot. Enable me to feast on the greatest of all delights, and may you too share the banquet, since the Muses cannot then absent themselves if we have *the pleasures of the imagination* to present them with. So I shall end with the grace and say—Lord bless us and our meat! Amen. I saw t'other day Miss Lesley Baillie, not well, but as fond of you as ever. F. A. D.

(1) Like many Liberals, Mrs. Dunlop was by this time disgusted with the horrors of the French Revolution.

(2) Gossip, the origin of which cannot be traced. Burns was at this time working hard for Thomson, was assiduous in attention to his excise duties, and was not even corresponding with any London editor.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Septr. 1794.

Dear Madam—I am so poorly to-day as to be scarce able to hold my pen, and so deplorably stupid as to be totally unable to hold it to any purpose; but as my good friend, THE MEMBER, franks it for me, it will only cost you the penance of reading. I know you are pretty deep read in Medical matters, but I fear you have nothing in the Materia Medica which can heal a diseased

SPIRIT. I think that the Poet's old companion, Poverty, is to be my attendant to my grave. You know that my brother, poor fellow! was on the brink of ruin, when my good fortune threw a little money among my hands which saved him for a while. Still his ruinous farm threatens to beggar him, and though, a bad debt of ten pounds excepted, he has every shilling I am worth in the world among his hands, I am nearly certain that I have done with it for ever. This loss, as to my individual self, I could hold it very light; but my little flock would have been the better for a couple of hundred pounds: for *their* sakes, it wrings my heart!

A propos, the other day, Mrs. Burns presented me with my fourth son, whom I have christened, JAMES GLENCAIRN[1]; in grateful memory of my lamented Patron. I shall make all my children's names, altars of gratitude. Poor dear little souls, they are all, the finest creatures in the world. I gratefully thank my God for his goodness in that respect. A fine constitution, and amiable dispositions, are of immense consequence to the happiness of the individual.

When did you hear from the East? Believe me, I am most anxiously interested in every thing dear to you. Have you any correspondence with little Wallace; and does he promise well? I know that he used to occupy a good deal of your thoughts. Ah, my dear Madam, the feelings of a Parent are not to be described! I sympathised much, the other day, with a father, a man whom I respect highly. He is a Mr. Staig, the leading man in our Borough. A girl[2] of his, a lovely creature of sixteen, was given over by the Physician, who openly said that she had but few hours to live. A gentleman who also lives in town, and who had studied medicine in the first schools—the Dr. Maxwell[3] whom Burke mentioned in the House of Commons about the affair of the daggers—he was at last called in; and his prescriptions, in a few hours altered her situation, and have now cured her. Maxwell is my most intimate friend, and one of the first characters I ever met with; but on account of his Politics is rather shunned by some high aristocrates, though his Family and Fortune entitle him to the first circles. I addressed the following epigram to him on the occasion:—

Maxwell, if merit here you crave,
That merit I deny:
You save fair Jessie from the grave!
An Angel could not die.

Here follows an Epigram of a different cast—

ON W—— R——, ESQ.[4]

So vile was poor Wat, such a miscreant slave,
That the worms even damn'd him when laid in his grave!
"In his scull there is famine!" a starv'd reptile cries;
"And his heart it is poison!" another replies.

I shall write you some ballads in a day or two, the playthings of my fancy of late. Farewell! ROBT. BURNS.

(1) James Glencairn, born 12th August 1794, died 18th November 1865.

(2) Miss Jessie Staig, daughter of Provost Staig, Dumfries, and subject also of the song "Young Jessie." She married Major William Miller, son of Mr. Miller of Dalswinton, Burns's old landlord.

(3) Dr. Maxwell (1760-1834), son of a noted Jacobite, James Maxwell of Kirkconnell; educated in France, and was present as a National Guardsman at the execution of Louis XVI. The speech of Burke's that is referred to was one delivered on 28th December 1792, in which he mentioned a gentleman who had ordered three thousand daggers at Birmingham.

(4) Walter Riddell of Woodley Park.

A letter of Mrs. Dunlop's announcing her impending journey to London, on account of Mrs. Perochon's illness, is missing.

Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House, Stewarton.

Dear Madam—Your letter gives me great concern. At this rigorous season, and at your time of life, a journey to London is no trifling matter. Why did you not tell me which of the young ladies was ill? I regret extremely your journey, and I regret still more the occasion of it. One thing is in your favor; you will have the advice and friendly consolation of your and my very good Friend, Dr. Moore.

Something else that was in your letter, I do not know how to mention. You have effectively precluded my writing you, at the time when sitting down to take up my pen to you was of most

consequence to me: in the desponding hour of oppressing care. My plaintive epistle, and the contents of your answer, give me, on my part, so much the air of mendicant insinuation, that I do not know how to lift up my head under it. I know not how to be the object of Pity. My enemies may dislike (for they dare not despise me) and I can repay them in kind; but the Pity of a Friend is quite distressing. But more than enough on the subject.

I would without hesitation have crossed the country to wait on you, but for one circumstance. A week ago I gave my little James the smallpox, and he is just beginning to sicken. In the mean time I will comfort myself that you will take Dumfries in your way: I shall be mortally disappointed if you do not. Remember, it is by much your nearest route.

At this time you will be all life and gayety, with your Ayr-races. We have had the Caledonians [Militia] here for this bypast fortnight; and of course, we have had a roar of Folly and Dissipation. Most of our fashionable young men have all that Profligacy and Outrage which have sometimes accompanied superior Understanding and brilliant Wit—but without those bright talents which might throw a kind of veil over mischievous Folly and unprincipled Wickedness.

One of the Corps provoked my ire the other day, which burst out as follows:—

TO THE HONBLE. MR. R. M——, OF P-NM-RE,[1] ON HIS HIGH PHAETON

Thou fool, in thy Phaeton towering,
Art proud when that Phaeton's prais'd?
'Tis the pride of a Thief's exhibition
When higher his pillory's rais'd.

Here is another on a more agreeable subject:—

ON SEEING MRS. KEMBLE[2] PERFORM THE PART OF *YARICO* IN DUMFRIES THEATRE

KEMBLE, thou cur'st my unbelief
Of Moses and his rod:
At Yarico's sweet notes of grief
The rock with *tears* had flow'd.

In the flattering hopes of seeing you, I remain, your obliged friend,

R. BURNS.

Oct. 29th, 1794.

(1) The Hon. William Ramsay Maule, second son of the Earl of Dalhousie and proprietor of Panmure; afterwards Baron Panmure. He gave Mrs. Burns a pension of £50 a year in 1817, but her son James was able after a year and a half to relieve him of the obligation.

(2) Mrs. Stephen Kemble played in the opera of "Inkle and Yarico" by George Coleman in October of this year. Burns saw her on the 24th, and the epigram was the result.

It would appear from her letter of 12th January, *infra*, that Mrs. Dunlop answered this letter also.

DUMFRIES, 20*th December* 1794.

I have been prodigiously disappointed in this London journey of yours. In the first place, when your last to me reached Dumfries, I was in the country and did not return until too late to answer your letter; in the next place, I thought you would certainly take this route; and now I know not what has become of you or whether this may reach you at all. God grant that it may find you and yours in prospering health and good spirits! Do let me hear from you the soonest possible.

As I hope to get a frank from my friend Captain Miller, I shall, every leisure hour, take up the pen and gossip away whatever comes first, prose or poesy, sermon or song. In the last article I have abounded of late. I have often mentioned to you a superb publication of Scottish songs which is making its appearance in your great metropolis, and where I have the honor to preside over the Scottish verse, as no less a personage than Peter Pinder does over the English.

December 29th.

Since I began this letter, I have been appointed to act in the capacity of supervisor here, and I assure you, what with the load of business, and what with that business being new to me, I could scarcely have commanded ten minutes to have spoken to you had you been in town, much less to have written you an epistle. This appointment is only temporary and during the illness of the present incumbent; but I look forward to an early period when I shall be appointed in full form: a consummation devoutly to be wished! My political sin seem to be forgiven me.

(*1st January* 1795.)

This is the season (New-year's day is now my date) of wishing; and mine are most fervently offered up for you! May life be to you a positive blessing while it lasts, for your own sake; and that it may yet be greatly prolonged, is my wish for my own sake and for the sake of the rest of your friends! What a transient business is life! Very lately I was a boy; but t'other day I was a young man; and I already begin to feel the rigid fibre and stiffening joints of old age coming fast o'er my frame. With all my follies of youth and, I fear, a few vices of manhood, still I congratulate myself on having had in early days religion strongly imprinted on my mind. I have nothing to say to any one as to which sect he belongs to or what creed he believes; but I look on the man who is firmly persuaded of infinite wisdom and goodness superintending and directing every circumstance that can happen in his lot—I felicitate such a man as having a solid foundation for his mental enjoyment; a firm prop and sure stay in the hour of difficulty, trouble and distress; and a never-failing anchor of hope when he looks beyond the grave.

12th January 1795.

You will have seen our worthy and ingenius friend the Doctor [Dr. Moore] long ere this. I hope he is well, and beg to be remembered to him. I have just been reading over again, I dare say for the hundred and fiftieth time, his *View of Society and Manners;* and still I read it with delight. His humour is perfectly original—it is neither the humour of Addison, nor Swift, nor Sterne, nor of any body but Dr. Moore. By the bye, you have deprived me of *Zeluco:* remember *that*, when you are disposed to rake up the sins of my neglect from among the ashes of my laziness.

He has paid me a pretty compliment by quoting me in his last publication. R. B.

London, *12th Janry.* 1795.

Dr. Burns—I write you from this Lethe of the world, you who seemed to forget me before I quitted the Land of Cakes, that poor retreat of friendly remembrance, you who were so unkind as to leave unnoticed my last enquiries for your child, about whose fate you had awakened my most earnest anxieties by what you said of his then situation and those consequent feelings that prevented my being able to shake you by the hand and at least

ake a kind farewell, for I will not say, as a neighbour of mine used to do, "having the pleasure of bidding you adieu," since with you I can truly aver I have ever found it pleasure to meet and pain to part. Yet I would again beg your alleviating the pang by letting me hear at 410 miles distance how you and all yours are, and whether you ever recollect such a creature as I was once an inhabitant of the county to which your residence has, I hope, added as much renown as the Muses can bestow, whose charms, by the by, I think make full as deep an impression on our countrymen as on this side the Tweed, where interest and dissipation absorb every moment of time and every sensation of the heart, and where people do not put themselves to the trouble of ever calling in poetic fiction to represent a shadow of those attachments which relation or friendship claim, and which in Scotland have their claims most commonly allowed.

I have been now a month—I can hardly say in London for I am like you only a kind of borderer, being, I believe, a little beyond the liberties of the town, but not beyond the freedom of conversation, which I daily hear stretched far beyond those limits Scots decorum now allows. Indeed it is ordinary to send our Premier[1] to Coventry with as much ease and as little ceremony as you could do any other man who went half seas over every morning by the hour of breakfast amongst *sans-culottes:* nor does any one seem inclinable to lend the poor man an assisting arm in his staggering state, which appears an unanswerable apology for all the stumbles he can make; and grievous ones he does make at almost every step. May heaven set them all to rights again, say I, for the sake of his friends and of his enemies.

I was with your friend the Doctor about a week. In our country he would be called a sad democrat, for we are the very pink of loyalty, and hate every word that fancy can connect with independence, which I believe will be the inspiring spirit of his intended publication now in the press, and pushing quickly into being. I have seen a few chapters, and believe it will be interesting, but more in the style of a Grumbletonian than I could have expected from a man who sees his own family raised to the very summit of his most presumptuous hopes by those powers which he seems so frequently and warmly to arraign. We had much discourse of you, and he bid me tell you he had wrot you a long and earnest letter on a subject he had much at heart, that he believed it had not come to hand by his having no return, but he had given it to one of the young surgeons you sent him, and wished you attending to the contents, since he was convinced you

would find advantage from doing so; that if you would write *Seasons*, and paint rural scenes and rural maners, not as Thomson did, but as you would naturally do, he would undertake to dispose of the manuscript to advantage, as he was certain you would succeed; that he would advise your only giving the world one at once, and beginning with Spring, which he would, however, have you first revise with that coolness an author gains by laying aside his work a while before he reads it over again, or, if you pleased, showing it to some of those friends you trusted most, but who might be a little less partial than yourself. I told him you were too fickle to be long partial to the same thing, that you always liked the last best, and after a while, I dare say, would judge as justly as anybody else. He asked if this peculiarity in your way of thinking was extended to your friends as well as your works. I told him I hoped not, and trusted on my return to Scotland I should be able to assure him as certainly of your steadiness as of his own, of which many people presume to promulgate strong doubts, and parties were divided in both the Sister Kingdoms. Indeed, I don't wonder tho' this cold, cold winter freeze many hearts, for never did I see or feel anything to match the inveteracy of this frosty, foggy atmosphere. Yet thank God! I have found a warm, hospitable fireside in the small dwelling, the only place in London that I know with a spare room; but here the master's house, like his wee purse, expands itself to accommodate no less than four of his friends at the same time—a thing wholly unknown to the rich or the great, and which, I fear, indicates an incapacity to reach those envied distinctions which tend in a great degree to contract the human soul and degrade the original workmanship of God as soon as it is gilded. Farewell! you are a poet, so run little risque of this metamorphosis, worse than any of Ovid's. Write me to the care of Mr. Perochon, Parsonage Walk, Newington Butts, London.

(1) Pitt, whose power was really broken by the outbreak of hostilities in 1793, and was now at the nadir of his reputation, by reason of the blunders of the war, added to the reactionary legislation which had been forced upon him.

Here the correspondence suddenly breaks off. Although it is not absolutely certain, it is exceedingly probable that Burns received no more letters from Mrs. Dunlop after this of the 12th January 1795. From the fragment which we print next in order, and which was obviously written in mid-

I told him you were too sickle to be long partial to the same thing that you always liked the best best ones of a while I dare say would judge as justly as any body of he asked if this peculiarity in your way of thinking was extended to your friends as well as your works I told him I hope not and trusted on my return to Scotland I should be able to assure him as certainly of your steadiness as of his own of which many people presumed to promulgate strong doubts and parties were divided in both the Sister Kingdoms indeed I dont wonder tho this cold cold wind freezes many hearts for never did I see or feel any thing to match the severe

I have found a warm hospitable reception in the meanest
dwelling. The only place in London that I know with a
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his friends at the same time a thing wholly unknown to
the Rich or the Great and which I fear indicates an
incapacity to be reach that high envied distinction which
find in a great degree to contract the human soul and
degrade the original worthiness of God as soon as it
did. Farewell you are a Poet to me. All respects to
the Metamorphosis work. Thanks enough. Write me to
the care of the Revd Dr Rochon Parsonage Walk Newington Butts Lond

summer of the same year, it is plain that between January and June no communication reached Burns from the lady. The pathetic reproach he addressed to her on the last day of January in the following year reveals the fact that he had sent her yet another budget in the interim, and although his words —"These many months you have been two packets in my debt" do not absolutely preclude the possibility of his having received one or more answers to other letters which he *may* have written between June and December, the chances are that we have everything before us in this volume that passed between the friends in 1795 except the whole of one and part of another letter of Burns's. The Lochryan MSS., then, confirm the belief that Mrs. Dunlop "deserted" Burns before he died; only the discovery of her letter of the 12th January 1795 reduces the period of the desertion from "about two years," as stated by Scott Douglas, to about eighteen months. The reason why Mrs. Dunlop did not give up this epistle for publication in 1800 is plain enough. It handled Dr. Moore pretty freely, and in 1800 Dr. Moore was still alive.

These MSS. throw no light whatever on the cause or causes of the breach. The correspondence of the poet and his friend had pursued a normal course. Commenced with warmth, earnestness, and industry on either side, it was carried on for a year or two with zest. Then it slackened—so early indeed as 1789—one or the other would take a rest for a few months, Burns being the more frequent offender. Mrs. Dunlop was frequently reproachful, nay angry at Burns's neglect; so much so as to send him a note written in the third person. She was perpetually wailing over the decadence of her correspondent's interest in her, and again apologising for her own laziness in letter-writing. Burns visited her at Dunlop at the end of 1792. Thereafter, from whatever reason, the correspondence languished more than ever, although in the occasional letters which they exchanged there was no falling away from the old cordiality. Up to the beginning of 1795 the lady seemed to be as anxious for a continuance of the correspondence and friendship, and as confidential and amicable as she had been at any time. Then she went to London, and in January 1795 broke off the correspondence suddenly, and, as we have shown is probable, finally. The

essential thing to be noted is that, although the interchange of somewhat fulsome compliments had long ceased to be an essential feature of the correspondence, there was really from first to last no absence of cordiality. In October 1794 Burns was lamenting that he had not been able to run across country to see his friend, and the last words of her last letter to him were "Write to me."

Although these MSS. have given up no fact bearing on the subject of Mrs. Dunlop's "desertion" of Burns, an impartial reading of the complete correspondence now possible for the first time, favours the hypothesis that the explanation of her conduct is to be found in inadvertence, and not in a deliberate design to break off all connection with the poet on account of any moral or political offence he had given her. It is almost incredible indeed that, if she was silent from carelessness alone, she could have resisted that pathetic appeal of the 31st of January. Yet surely it would have been equally hard for her to ignore that appeal if she had been offended with the poet, whatever the nature of the offence might have been. What cause of alienation could he have given? Certainly he did not offend Mrs. Dunlop personally, for there is no trace of apology in any of the letters he sent her after the breach. Could it have been either a moral or a political offence? There is no reason to believe that Burns's conduct as a man differed in the last eighteen months of his life from his conduct of the years immediately preceding, which was in the main perfectly familiar to Mrs. Dunlop. And as for politics, he had not been for years so free to liberate his soul as he was at this epoch; the "Tory frenzy" was past, and the Liberal candidate for the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright won the election in 1785 by the help of Burns's Heron Election Ballads, which the place-man poet was able to circulate without fear of the Board of Excise.

To Mrs. Dunlop.

[*Midsummer*, 1795.]

THE DUMFRIES VOLUNTEERS—A BALLAD[1]

Tune—Push about the jorum.

Does haughty Gaul invasion threat,
Then let the louns beware, Sir, fellows
There's WOODEN-WALLS upon our seas,
And VOLUNTEERS on shore, Sir:
The Nith shall run to Corsincon,[2]
And Criffel[2] sink in Solway,
E'er we permit a FOREIGN FOE
On British ground to rally.

O let us not, like snarling tykes, dogs
In wrangling be divided,
Till, slap! come in an UNCO LOUN, strange fellow
And wi' a rung decide it! cudgel
Be Britain still to Britain true,
Amang oursels united;
For only but by British hands
Maun British wrangs be righted. must

The kettle o' the Kirk and State
Perhaps a clout may fail in't,
But deil a FOREIGN tinkler-loun
Shall ever ca' a nail in't: drive
Our FATHERS' BLUDE the kettle bought,
And wha wad dare to spoil it,
By Heavens, the sacreligious dog
Shall fuel be to boil it!

The wretch that would a TYRANT own,
And the wretch, his true-sworn brother,
Who'd set the MOB above the THRONE,
May they be damn'd together!
Who will not sing, God save the KING,
Shall hang as high's the steeple;
But while we sing, God save the KING
We'll ne'er forget THE PEOPLE.

I am afraid, Dear Madam, that this parcel will be a bad bargain, at the price it will cost you, ere it reach you. Miss Keith will see that I have omitted the four lines on the ci-devant Commodore which gave her so much offence. Had I known that he stood in no less connection than the Godfather of my lovely young Friend, I would have spared him for her sake.

I expected to have heard from you, how you arrived home and

how you found your friends; but in the hurry of momentous matters, I suppose such a trifling circumstance had escaped your recollection.—Adieu! R. BURNS.

(1) These lines were published in *The Edinburgh Courant* of 4th May 1795, in *The Dumfries Journal* of the following day, and in *The Caledonian Mercury* of the 7th. They form No. 546 of the sixth volume of Johnson's *Museum*. Their *motif* was the raising in Dumfries of two companies of volunteers as part of the force for the defence of the country in the absence of the army, which was fighting France abroad. Burns was a member of the corps.

(2) Hills respectively at the source and near the mouth of the river Nith.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

DUMFRIES, 31*st January* 1796.

These many months you have been two packets in my debt—what sin of ignorance I have committed against so highly valued a friend I am utterly at a loss to guess. Alas! Madam, ill can I afford, at this time, to be deprived of any of the small remnant of my pleasures. I have lately drunk deep of the cup of affliction. The autumn robbed me of my only daughter[1] and darling child, and that at a distance too, and so rapidly, as to put it out of my power to pay the last duties to her. I had scarcely begun to recover from that shock, when I became myself the victim of a most severe rheumatic fever and long the die spun doubtful; until after many weeks of a sick bed, it seems to have turned up life, and I am beginning to crawl across my room, and once indeed have been before my own door in the street.

When pleasure fascinates the mental sight,
Affliction purifies the visual ray,
Religion hails the drear, the untried, night,
And shuts, for ever shuts! life's doubtful day.

R. B.

(1) Elizabeth Riddell, who, as already stated, died in September 1795.

Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House, Stewarton.

Madam—I have written you so often without recg. any answer, that I would not trouble you again but for the circumstances in which I am. An illness which has long hung about

Madam

I have written you so often without rec.d any answer, that I would not trouble you again but for the circumstances in which I am. — An illness which has

beyond that bourne whence no traveller returns.—
Your friendship with which for many years you honored me
was a friendship dearest to my soul.—Your conversation
& especially your correspondence were at once highly
entertaining & instructive.— With what pleasure
did I use to break up the seal! The remembrance
yet adds one pulse more to my poor palpitating heart!

Farewell!!!

July 10th 1796

Robert Burns

me in all probability will speedily send me beyond that bourne whence no traveller returns. Your friendship with which for many years you honored me was a friendship dearest to my soul. Your conversation and especially your correspondence were at once highly entertaining and instructive. With what pleasure did I use to break up the seal! The remembrance yet adds one pulse more to my poor palpitating heart!—Farewell!!!

ROBERT BURNS.

10*th July* 1796.

This letter has hitherto been misdated the 12th. The "1796" is not in Burns's hand.

THE END

APPENDIX A

The following letter, which is of biographical interest, was found in the Lochryan collection :—

GILBERT BURNS TO MRS. DUNLOP.

MOSSGIEL, *2d April* 1797.

Madam—If Dr. Curry's letter had come to my hand I should have concluded that every little consideration of oeconomy ought to give way that you might be gratifyed with a sight of it; but, I have never been honored with any communication either from Mr. Fergusson or Mr. Cunningham.

I am affraid you will scarcely be able to keep your temper with Mr. C. for this disappointment, and repeated instance of neglect, but as he is at present engaged in endeavouring to secure the honours of Glencairn to his father and himself, he is perhaps entitled to some excuse on that account. To trim the sacred tree of herraldry (the favorite of your dream), is an avocation so superior to the ordinary employments of life that attention to more vulgar dutys must be allowed to give way before it.

The manuscript book of letters is at Liverpool as an important part of the materials from which the future publication is to be selected, but as soon as it has served that purpose you may depend on getting it.

I found my brother's debts to exceed my calculation by 12 or 15 pounds. My own resources too had fallen so short that I had determined to borrow your present agreeable to your kind offer. But Mrs. Burns needed money and was shy of applying to the Trustees on the funds, so I gave her your present determined to meet the Trustees in the midst of my deficiencys and my poverty. I comforted myself that however much these might lessen me in the opinion of the world, I had come honestly by

them, and they ought not to lessen me in my own esteem. Still, however, with all the resolution I could muster I have scarcely ever been in a situation more uneasy to my feelings. Mr. Wallace had not had sufficient authority from the trustees for the message he sent me by Mr. Armour, viz. that they would pay whatever I could not conveniently advance. He had founded it merely on some expressions of Mr. Syme's, and *his* ideas seemed to go no farther than to accommodate me for a few months. I explained my situation fully and fairly to him and Dr. Maxwell, who both expressed their confidence that the other trustees would agree with them in taking such measures as would prevent my being distressed. Upon my consulting with my wife, however, after I came home, we concluded it would be wrong to risk so great a proportion of the property of my brother's family any longer in this farm which had uniformly disappointed our expectations hitherto.

I wrote Dr. Maxwell and Mr. Syme that I was thinking of this, and requesting that they would inform themselves if there was any farm not exceeding 100 acres of good land and in good condition in the vicinity of Dumfries that I might take at a fair rent. I inclose the answer I received from Mr. Syme. I have now finally taken my resolution of giving up this farm at all hazards, but as I have not yet explained myself on this subject to Mr. Alexander I do not tell it to the world. What may be my future destiny in life I do not know. My wish is to get a lease of a small farm of good land capable of being ploughed with two horses. Failing this should be glad of a place as a steward or overseer on some gentleman's estate. If neither of these should occur I will endeavour with as much cheerfulness as possible to follow where the wise providence of Almighty God shall seem to lead, and will endeavour to perform the dutys of that situation in the best manner I can. I did not mention these difficultys to you in my last because I had not then taken my resolution, and I considered that I had no right to tax you with my distresses. I know your sympathetic mind: you have had your own portion of sorrows, why should you be burdened with mine when it is not necessary.

If ever, Madam, I have been so happy as by any little attention of mine to convince you of my will to have it in my power to oblige or serve you, I beg you will consider it, not as that undistinguishing homage which weak man but too frequently pays to mere rank and station in life; but, as the homage of the heart to a person who I really honour and esteem.

I hope to have the pleasure of being at Dunlop house toward the end of this month or the beginning of next, till when I remain, Madam, your most obt. hble. ser., GILBERT BURNS.

P.S.—However much I may think oeconomy and attention to small matters my duty at present, I beg you will not hesitate to write to me when you have any thing to communicate or want any information that I can give. I trust in God I shall never want threepence to pay the postage when Mrs. Dunlop shall honour me with a letter. G. B.

APPENDIX B

The editors of the *Centenary* edition have utilised the Lochryan MSS. in their treatment of the "Passion's Cry" question (vol. ii. pp. 427-429), but it is necessary to subject their treatment to revision in the light of a more thorough examination of the documents. They commence with the following categorical statement:—"The earlier written part, beginning line 19, 'I burn, I burn,' etc., was produced in 1787, after hearing the end of a divorce case in which, on March 7th, the Court of Session decided that the husband might proceed against the lover without divorcing his wife," and so on. This insertion is intended to be a flat contradiction of the editor of the Aldine edition of 1839, who published the lines as addressed to Clarinda. We shall see afterwards that it is as flatly contradicted in its turn by the Burns-Dunlop *Correspondence*. But in the first place we must inquire on what the statement is based. So far as can be discovered, the *Centenary* editors do not profess to have any other warrant than the following additional statement of their own (ii. 428):—"This earlier portion was sent from Edinburgh to Mrs. Dunlop in an undated letter (Lochryan MSS.), in which Burns mentions that he has that day corrected the last proof-sheet of his poems." Now, this is a singularly loose and inaccurate sentence. The only solid fact it contains is that Mrs. Dunlop received a letter from Burns in Edinburgh, in which he announced that he had that day corrected the last proof-sheet of his poems. We have examined that letter; it is printed at p. 15 of this volume; it is not undated; it is a postscript, hitherto missing, of the letter of 22nd March 1787, and is written on the first page of a sheet of post, the last page of which formed the envelope of the whole;

and finally, it did not contain as an enclosure the "earlier written" portion of "Passion's Cry." The editors of the *Centenary* have guessed the date of the "undated" letter accurately enough. If Burns wrote, "I burn, I burn," after hearing the Maxwell-Campbell *crim. con.* case on 7th March 1787, he *could* have sent Mrs. Dunlop a copy in a letter written as he completed the proof of revision of the Edinburgh edition, which was published on the 21st of April. A simple inspection of the Lochryan MS. of the lines proves that it was not sent to Mrs. Dunlop till 1788. The MS. occurs on the third page of a sheet of post paper. On the first page is a holograph MS. of "On scaring some Water-fowl on Loch-Turit," and on the fourth is a holograph MS. of "The Chevalier's Lament." Now, "The Chevalier's Lament" was, according to Burns's letter to Cleghorn of 31st March 1788, written on the 30th March of that year; therefore the poet could not have sent Mrs. Dunlop a sheet containing a copy of it in 1787. But the Lochryan MSS. enable us to fix within very narrow limits the date of her receipt of this sheet with its treble treasure. On a day towards the end of March 1788, Mrs. Dunlop wrote to Burns, "Remember you promised me your address to the wild ducks" (see p. 53). On the 31st Burns replied, "The poems I promised you, I must confess debt and crave days." That indicates that he had promised her a copy of the verses "On scaring some water-fowl," and other poems. It is almost beyond a doubt that the four-page sheet before us is the fulfilment of that pledge. It was never directly acknowledged by the lady, but it is exceedingly probable that she refers to it in her letter of Mid-June (p. 69), in which she says: "Coming down the hill, I took a letter of yours out of my pocket; it enclosed a fragment of a poem you once sent me. You called it a sin-offering; perhaps it should also have been a burnt-offering; yet I should have regretted it had, for I confess I thought it an incense of a sweet-smelling savour." There is no other poem of this period that could have been so spoken of; when it is added that the "Passion's Cry" lines in the Lochryan MS. are entitled "A Fragment," the proof seems complete that the MS. was sent to Mrs. Dunlop between the end of March and the beginning of June 1788. In regard to the date, it only requires to be added that the editors of the *Centenary* edition, in attempting to answer the question, at what period was "Passion's Cry" sent to Clarinda? fall into an extraordinary mistake. They say "It was probably sent in 1787, about the same time as to Mrs. Dunlop." It may have been sent to Clarinda simultaneously with Mrs.

Dunlop in 1788, but it could scarcely have been sent to Mrs. Maclehose, much less addressed to her in 1787, seeing that the poet did not make her acquaintance till December of that year!

As to the origin of "Passion's Cry," the Lochryan MSS. decidedly confirm the Aldine story that the earlier verses were addressed to Clarinda. Burns, as we have seen, told Mrs. Dunlop that they were a sin-offering, and she plainly took them as a more or less accurate record of experience. On 5th February 1789 he sent Mrs. Dunlop the improved version with the following explanation:—"I believe I formerly mentioned some of the following verses to you, but I have since altered them with a view to interweave them in an epistle from an unfortunate lady whom you knew" (see p. 144). His letter of 24th July to Cunningham with the whole poem as we now know it, need not be quoted. Here we have evidence which is at least consistent with the theory that the verses were originally addressed to Clarinda—the editors of the *Centenary* deny that there is such evidence—and ample evidence, combined with the above demonstration as to dates, to disprove the theory that Mrs. Maxwell-Campbell was the original subject of "Passion's Cry." As to the *fons et origo* of the remarkable thesis we have commented upon, it is possible merely to conjecture that the editors of the *Centenary*, in examining the Lochryan MSS., found that the sheet containing "Passion's Cry" was enclosed (by accident of course) in the sheet which has been shown to be the postscript of a letter of 22nd March 1787.

APPENDIX C

Mrs. Dunlop's letter of 30th July 1787 is but a postscript to a double sheet of verses. The following are the best, very interesting as a rough picture, with a touch of caricature, of the poet's appearance and manner:—

TO ROBT. BURNS.

This world's a farce, and all things show it;
I thought so once, but now I know it.
Gay.

Five months of expectation past,
The long-wish'd hour arrived at last.
A face peept in just at the door,
The welcome head [1] had come before.
Genius and humour sparkle in the eyes,
Frank independence native ease supplys.
Good sense and manly spirit mark the air,
And mirth and obstinacy too were there.
A peering glance sarcastic wit confest,
The milk of human kindness fill'd the breast.
While pride and parts the features thus controul,
Good-nature lurk'd an inmate of the soul.
So the green nut's sweet, milky juice comprest
In a hard shell and acid husk is drest.
Surpris'd my heart went pitter patter,
I could not think what was the matter.
Can this be Burns? It is, I'm sure;
None else could look so like John Moore.
Besides, ilk circumstance declare
The author of *The Holy Fair*.
A thousand questions straight I plan,
Some of the Muse, some of the Man,
All friendly chat, not table talk,
But destin'd for an evening walk.
Could I like you with ease rehearse
Each passing thought in polished verse;
Or, where the couplet would not close,
Borrow your soul-commanding prose,
I'd paint the horrors of that day,
When you were cross, and would not stay;
My words with so much art I'd pack,
As soon should win the poet back.
But my crow-quill wants strength to tell
What joy was murder'd when you bade farewell.
'Twas then in haste each ask'd by turns
What every other thought of Burns.
Some sigh with disappointed air
To see the Bard so fat and fair;
Think sentiment should make sad havock
Both in the flesh and in the stomach.

[1] Mrs. Dunlop had previously received an impression of the Beugo engraving of Burns. (See page 20.)

Not Cassius' meagre plight of yore
E'er vext great Cæsar half so sore;
Whilst others miss'd the waked loof,[1]
And found in that an ample proof
That, uninspired by Coila's look,
He's college-bred, and rhyming by the book,
Without his plough turns up his mice,
Nor goes to church to look for lice.
Or if some critic seek a fuller,
His chamber'd daisey's lost her colour.
Some mark, misled by fashion's call,
You'd share with few the rights of all;
Would stretch out farms beyond their bounds,
And plant sub-tyrants in our bounds.
Some wish the man would mend his Greek,
And only like Longinus speak.
It was not so that Heathen wrot,
When he old Genesis would quote;
Nor would he e'er made Jesus shine
With Bishop Geddes in a line,
Since tane with Edinbrugh's whinstane hearts,
He grows soon sick of country parts.
Now goes the cook to warn for dinner
"Faith, lads" (quoth she), "as I'm a sinner,
Yon chiel gade in wi' spurs and boots
Is daft Rob Burns that prents and shoots,
Does nought but cast about quire clashes,
And rant and rin and chase the lasses."
Sine wrights and masons ane and a'
Wi' hurry lap down frae the wa'.
"Losh, keep's, is't him? What like's his horse?
I'm sure his book's no worth a curse.
Trow ye there's siller in his purse?
Siller! A poet never had a groat.
But faith! We'll look his muckle coat.
Gosh guide's! See, witch and fairy tales he reads;
I doubt he's papist too, and counts his beads."
"Hout! sic a lee," says Nelly, "ne'er was seen;
Dear man, can ye no read the *Faery Queen?*"
By this the horse was standing ready,
The Bard bade farewell to the Lady.

[1] Waked loof = hardened palm.

They looked by the stable end,
To keek and glow'r and no be ken'd.
Then out the mistress cast an ee
To look what fairlies she could see.
In Ayr she'd served to mend her breeding,
Doctors and Dukes and Bailie Lemon ;
In polished Barr the mistress born,
Displays gentility in scorn.
"Giff that be Burns, he may hae lear,
But faith ! I'm sure he has nae mair.
He's brought his havins [1] frae the plough,
Ne'er touch'd his hat, nor made a bow ;
Lap on his horse, and pu'd his coat thegither,
Clash'd to the Major's gin he'd been his brother.
He may write books, but by his gate,
He's little sense and vera great conceit."
Thus jibes and jeers ran helter-skelter,
And neither man nor horse find shelter.
But peevish spleen before to-morrow
Gave place to sober, serious sorrow
That he who knew to please us all
Should find his pleasure here so small.

. . . . . .

[1] Havins = manners.

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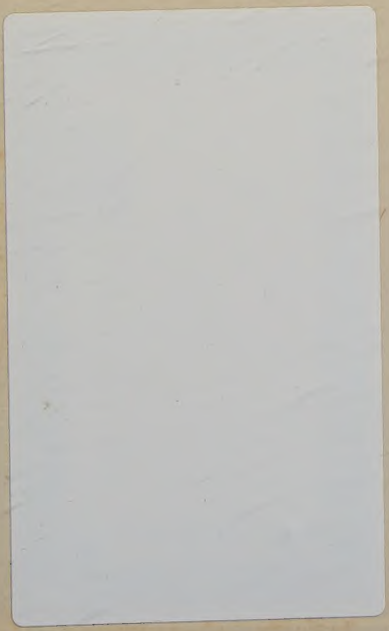
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